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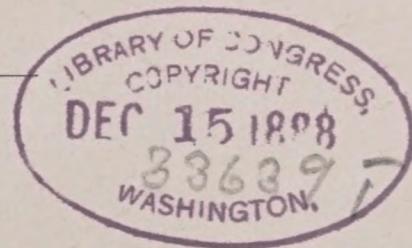


Veni! Vidi! —?

BY

BELLE M. MILLER.

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TO MY MOTHER

THIS FIRST LITERARY EFFORT IS
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

MAY IT HELP TO RECALL THE CONSTANT AND GRATEFUL
LOVE OF HER WHO DEDICATES IT TO YOU.

PREFAGE.

WE deem it unnecessary to offer any apology for putting this charming little story in print, the manuscript of which was found among the Author's effects after her decease.

It was written before her marriage, and in its dedication she was as ever mindful of her mother, to whom her whole life was a constant devotion.

Its many beautiful and touching sentiments bespeak the admirable qualities of her mind and heart from which they proceeded; while its intrinsic literary excellence gives promise of a brilliant future, had the author been permitted to reach the full fruition of her rare gift. That these pages may assist in preserving fresh in the minds of her many friends the memory of one whose life was so full of gentleness and loving kindness, is the fond wish and hope of her sister,

JULIA A. MILLER.

VENI! VIDI! —?

CHAPTER I.

There was nothing distinctive about Kingston, beyond its name. Every one knows the sort of railroad station, which possesses a long, narrow platform, a tiny box of a waiting room, and a lame station master. Usually, as was the case here, a half dozen houses and a blacksmith shop are scattered near, and, save from the smoke from the blacksmith's chimney, you would fancy the populace were sleeping or dead.

To day is a red-letter day for the little station master. There are two arrivals—one a slender girl in gray, the other, apparently, her mother. They are not strangers to the little old man, still he had seen nothing like them for a year, and what are his eyes good for, if not to see that which is directly before them?

“Have none of the Bernards been here to-day?” the girl was asking.

“No, ma’am, I can’t say as they have, an’

I'm sure I must ha' seed 'em if they had 'a' come."

The girl smiled slightly as she looked down the quiet road, knowing that a vehicle of any sort brought the inhabitants of the few houses to the windows, burning with curiosity to know who was passing.

"When will the stage go over to St. Benedict?" she continued.

"Indeed, ma'am, I can't say. You see Tim he's gone to a picnic, an' besides him, there ain't much o' any one to drive. There's no tellin' when he'll get back when he goes to a picnic onc't."

The girl glanced around at the dilapidated railway maps, fly-adorned calendars, and last year's circus posters, which served to decorate the walls of the stuffy little waiting room, then asked again:

"Isn't it possible to find some one to take us out there?"

The old man always looked back on that day with pride, for, after prolonged scratching of the head and clearing of the throat, he originated an idea.

"Why John, that's my boy, he kin hitch up

and take you over, if you don't mind ridin' in a spring wagon," he announced eagerly.

"What do you say, mamma?" the girl asked, turning to the handsome old lady, who was beginning to look annoyed.

"I am sure, Rachel, you can do as you please. For my part, I don't see how we can ride six miles over those rough hills in an open wagon," she answered impatiently.

The old man hastily assured her it was only "four miles, and it wouldn't be that fur if it wa'n't fur the hills," ending with the assurance that John was a "good driver, and could beat lots of the men 'round there, if he did say it himself, as oughtn't."

It was finally decided to accept the proffered "spring wagon," and in a short time a freckled lad drove to the platform in a vehicle, whose appearance was more substantial than they had expected. After depositing satchels and packages, and climbing in, they moved slowly down the hill which led from the station. Immediately after their departure, the train coming from the opposite direction from the one on which these travelers had arrived, swept past the little platform, stopping long enough to deposit a single passenger. The boy promptly

halted at the foot of the hill, stretching his neck to catch a glimpse of this last arrival.

“I thought I heerd pap a-callin’,” he said, in answer to their natural inquiry as to the cause of the delay.

In another moment the author of the be-freckled youth’s existence was seen at the top of the hill, frantically waiving his arms, and shouting “John” with a pair of lungs which nature seemed to have created exceptionally strong, to atone for the discrepancy in his legs.

John calmly turned around in his seat, and patiently waited until his sire came up with them.

“You see, ma’am,” gasped John senior, a trifle used up by the unusual speed with which he had limped down hill, “ther’s another man wants to go over to Bernard’s too, an’ I thought, ef you didn’t mind much, he could jest go right along here with you. He can set in the front seat with John.”

“The very idea! Of course we mind,” the mother began, when she was interrupted by a whisper, “Oh, mamma, hush!” and, turning quickly in the direction of her daughter’s eyes, she saw approaching the vehicle a young man

who bore unmistakable indications of a gentleman.

“By Jove,” thought the new arrival, as they turned toward him, “this is a windfall! Why didn’t that old fool tell me they were somebody?”

Coming nearer, he began, “I beg your pardon, madam, for being the cause of stopping you. I fear this man’s proposition will be unpleasant to you. After telling him I was bound for Bernard’s, he rushed wildly after you, saying this would be my last chance until night,” and he appeared about to turn away, as if it were quite out of the question.

“You are quite welcome to the vacant seat, if you like,” the elder lady returned graciously, visibly thawing before the young man’s easy manner. “The wait at the station would be very tiresome.”

“That’s a charming old lady,” he thought as he thanked her and deposited himself and his satchel in the front seat.

“May I tell you my name is Philip King?” he said, after the old horse had once more jogged along, leaving the man standing in the road, in a state of benign satisfaction, at the result of his arrangement. “Our mutual

friend at the station, who seems to have a genius for ordering the minor details of life, told me you are Mrs. Dare," and he smiled as he addressed himself to the older lady with a decidedly questioning glance in the direction of the younger.

"Yes," she replies, smiling pleasantly in return. "My daughter and myself spend sometime every summer at Bernard's, and the station master does us the honor to remember us."

There was a little pause after this, each one apparently intent on the beautiful landscape before them. On either side of the white road, gleaming with mica, lay waving fields of grain, faintly tinged with yellow, as the late June sun shone warmly down upon it. Beyond the fields on one side rose a low range of hills, wild, rocky, barren, forming strange contrast to the rich fertility resting at their feet. Farther on, there was a break in the grizzly barricade, where wound a river, looking in the distance like scarcely more than a silver thread gleaming in the sunlight.

Mrs. Dare was the first to turn from the peaceful scene before them, and remarked:

“We shall not find those hills so delightful by and by, when we pass over them. Do you see there where the road winds almost over the top of the last one? I declare, Rachel, every time I come over this road I make a new resolution that this shall be the last time. Not that it isn’t pleasant enough, after we are once there, but such a journey! It positively requires a whole summer to rest.”

All this was said with a little flutter of the delicately-gloved hands, and a sort of bird-like movement of the head from one side to the other, as the bright blue eyes flashed alternately from the young man to her daughter.

Rachel had all this time kept her face turned resolutely toward the hills, leaving only a very fine profile for Philip’s admiring gaze. She only smiled in answer to her mother’s remark, giving the young man a glimpse of a remarkably fine pair of eyes, as she redirected her gaze to the landscape.

“I’ll be hanged if she isn’t pretty!” he thought. “I wish she’d speak.”

“My husband once had an intimate friend whose name was the same as yours,” remarked Mrs. Dare, who evidently had a decided re-

pugnance for silence. "He was a charming man. I wonder if it could be possible that you are any way related to him?"

"That was my father's name," and the young man turned toward her with an eager boyish manner. "If John Dare is your husband, he was undoubtedly the Philip King you speak of. I am always glad to meet an old friend of my father's; won't you shake hands with me, now that we know each other?" as he stretched out his hand with a pleased smile, which won the gentle little lady's friendship on the spot.

"Dear me, how fortunate!" and she shook hands with him delightedly. "Rachel, did you ever know anything so lucky? I do love to know who people are, and to think it was the merest accident that we found out, too! Its exactly like an incident which occurred once on our way to the White Mountains. Don't you remember, Rachel, that young man who was so attentive to us after the accident? What was his name? was it Richards? No, it couldn't have been, for that was the other man's name."

"I don't remember his name, mamma," Rachel answered, rather absently. "It don't

seem to me there is much similarity between the two cases."

"Now does'nt it? I must say I think its remarkable; not that Mr. King looks at all like this Mr.—what *was* his name?—for Mr. King is tall and slender, and the other man was short and stout. Besides I am very certain he had red hair."

Philip was rejoicing in the fact that Miss Dare had finally spoken, and wondering what he could do that she would be obliged to speak again, for her silence unaccountably irritated him. Her mother talked a great deal, discovering numerous mutual acquaintances as they proceeded, while the daughter took apparently no interest in the rather one-sided conversation, save when appealed to.

The road grew rough and stony as the old horse moved slowly up the hill, and Mrs. Dare was in a state of constant agitation as she tried to think what they should do if the horse would suddenly stop and the wagon roll to the foot again.

"This yer horse ain't the rollin' kind," the boy insisted, finding Philip's efforts to allay her fears were vain. "He don't do nothin' like that, 'cept to kick the bottom out of the

wagon sometimes, when you hit him with the whip, kind o' sudden like."

The young man smiled at this Job's comforter, and moving his head slightly in Miss Dare's direction, caught a bright gleam of merriment as she glanced toward him, leaving him with the pleasant sensation that they knew something the others did not.

At the top of the hill, while the boy rested his horse for a moment, Philip saw a bunch of early laurel, shining white among the brown trunks of the trees, and bringing it to Rachel, presented it with an almost diffident air, which surprised himself. She looked steadily at him as she thanked him with a gracious smile, but that was all.

"That girl can talk if she wants to; I hope she will want to some time soon," was his mental comment as he reseated himself.

Just when he was beginning to think a wagon like this wasn't such a bad thing after all, they turned a sharp curve, onto a level road, and Mrs. Dare exclaimed:

"Thank goodness! there is Bernard's at last!"

"I am in luck!" declared Philip, as their

youthful coachman steered them safely up the long lane.

A large old-fashioned red-brick house stood before them, the hall door dividing the front, and opening onto a wide porch which extended along two sides of the house. The pillars of the porch, and a large portion of the house itself were covered with a profusion of American ivy and trumpet vine, heavy with crimson blossoms.

From the porch there extended a green slope, dotted here and there with forest trees, down to the river, which, by a convenient turn, formed two of the boundaries of the place. On the opposite bank the hills arose again, covered with a mass of ever-varying green. Now and then the solid gray rock was bare, protruding itself among the wild verdure.

Away down the river a spire could be seen on one of the hilltops, and rings of smoke were ascending in the clear air. Back of these a higher range was visible, dimly outlining their huge forms against the perfect blue of the June sky.

They had only driven half way up the lane when the bark of a large Newfoundland announced their arrival.

A stout, motherly old lady appeared at the doorway, and, seeing them approach, bustled toward them, shining with good nature from the top of the smooth head to the hem of the blue calico gown.

“Bless my heart, Ellen,” she called back to a pretty girl who had followed her rather timidly to the door, “if here ain’t Mrs. Dare and Miss Rachel; and Mr. Armstrong did come, after all! Why no, it ain’t Mr. Armstrong neither.”

By this time the old horse had reached the wooden steps which served as carriage stone, and its occupants alighted, Mrs. Dare performing the ceremony of introduction, perceiving Mrs. Bernard’s surprise on seeing a stranger with them. Philip was too busy taking in the minor details of the landscape, where he saw material for a dozen pictures, to explain himself.

“I’m powerful glad to see you,” announced the old lady heartily, “but I didn’t look for any of you till to-morrow.”

“When no one met us at the station I supposed you had not received my last letter,” Rachel said. “We are here, at any rate, and you will have to make the best of us,” she added, with a little laugh.

With this, Philip remembered his manners, and explained that he, too, had found it more convenient to come to-day, murmuring something about a friend coming part of the journey with him.

“That don’t make one bit of difference, only we’d a sent for you ef we’d know’d it. But come in the house! Look at me a keepin’ you standin’ out here as ef I didn’t want you to come in,” and she led the way as she spoke.

“You can’t make me believe that is Ellen standing in the doorway,” Mrs. Dare said as they stepped onto the porch, “for the child has grown so tall.”

“Yes it is,” answered Ellen’s mother, delighted; “I said you’d think that, didn’t I, Ellen? She’s been over to Putnam to school this year. Why don’t you come and speak to the folks, Ellen?”

By this time Ellen had overcome her timidity sufficiently to bow to Philip and offer her hand to the Dares.

The travelers were ushered from the wide hall, which divided the house in halves, into a large room, bright and airy, which Mrs. Bernard called the parlor. Old-fashioned hair-cloth furniture stood stiffly about on the huge

flowered Brussels carpet. In the corner by the window was a handsome new piano, which Mrs. Bernard exhibited with much pride, explaining that "Ellen had learned to play over to Putnam."

They were assembled here only a few moments, for Mrs. Dare declared herself "tired out of her life," and Ellen accompanied them to their rooms, her mother explaining "she'd go herself, but she was gittin' so stout she didn't climb more 'an she had to."

Rachel's and her mother's rooms were adjoining, and Philip's was opposite, their pretty little guide telling them that "mother had given him the room back of Mr. Armstrong's, for she was hoping Mr. Armstrong would change his mind and come after all."

CHAPTER II.

Philip entered the chamber assigned to him, to find the same neatness and precision prevailing which reigned below. The bare, white walls, the clean rag carpet here made the gorgeous Brussels carpet down stairs wander before his eyes as a positive luxury. The bed, piled high with feathers, stood in one corner of the large room, covered with a gay quilt, fancifully pieced with red and green. Philip found himself mechanically wondering if the initials M. B. in the center of it were meant for Mary Bernard, or possibly Martha. "She looks like a Martha," he mused, and then laughed at his own curiosity.

In another corner of the chamber stood a high chest of drawers, a small oval mirror adorning the top. Besides these important but scarcely ornamental articles, a wash-stand and several chairs constituted the furniture of the room.

Philip groaned as he stood grimly surveying this interior, then crossing quickly to the open window opposite, drew back the muslin curtain and looked down on the quiet scene below. As he stood, the shade of dissatisfac-

tion, which had arisen to his face during his inspection of the room, quickly disappeared, leaving in its place enthusiastic admiration.

"I'll be hanged if this isn't worth living for a month or two in such a room," he muttered. "The place won't look bad after my traps come. It's clean and airy, and we couldn't say that much for that place in Vermont last summer, and we thought we were in clover then. That was a pretty little girl who brought us up stairs."

While justifying the room to himself, he had opened his satchel and began the task of ridding himself of the dust accumulated during his day's travel, wondering how long it would take that old man at the station to send over the baggage.

Philip King's father had made a fortune in coal and iron, and it had been his fondest hope that his only offspring should walk in the path he had marked out. Fortunately for both, he had died while Philip was still a lad, for his son had neither taste nor inclination for business pursuits.

From his mother, who had lived but a few months after his birth, he inherited a fondness for art, and finding himself possessed of the

means to indulge this taste, and no longer any one to dictate to him, he cultivated his artistic talent industriously. To his credit, be it said, he really worked, and in consequence whereof was successful. His pictures were accepted at the academy, and found ready sale. He often declared they sold simply because he did not need the money, "while lots of poor devils, who painted better pictures, were dying of starvation." He was accustomed to going and coming exactly *when* he pleased and *as* he pleased, and perhaps the fact that no human being expected anything of him had served to develop a rather decided line of selfishness, which, under different circumstances, might have been avoided. Handsome, clever, good-natured, and, above all, rich, small wonder he was a favorite. To be sure, he was a little uncertain, and hard to secure, but that only served to make people doubly glad when he was very safe in their clutches. There is nothing that makes a man quite so popular as a little glamour spread over his movements. For the rest he was impulsive, and usually acted upon the first impulse, which happily, as yet, had never carried him far out of the road. Possibly he had received a trifle more adulation

than was quite healthful, but then who knows exactly where to draw the line.

The Bernard's advertisement for summer boarders had accidentally met his eye in glancing idly over the *Times*, and sitting down answered it immediately. Then fearing he would change his mind, came a day before the one appointed.

"I can surely stand it a week," he told himself as he brushed his hair that evening, "with two such pretty girls in the house."

Across the hall, Mrs. Dare was endeavoring to persuade Rachel to express intense delight that Mr. King was to be one of the household. "For you know," she insisted, "it would have been frightfully stupid without Dick. Though why he couldn't have come here as well as he could go to the White Mountains, I don't see," and she sent a keen little glance after Rachel as she left the room.

The apartments on this side of the house were much more luxurious than that which had clouded Philip's brow a moment ago. The Dares had added various articles from time to time until the rooms had begun to wear quite a furnished appearance. Very

pretty paper covered the wall, and a quite presentable ingrain carpet was on the floor. "When our pictures and ornaments come," Rachel was thinking, "the rooms will really be quite pretty. I didn't know it was so pretty here," moving to the window and standing for a time gazing down on the river, where the afternoon sun was throwing long shadows.

How peaceful it seemed here! She felt that one had little to wish for when the trouble and noise of city life were left behind them. How long it had been since that first year! She was a frail little thing then, and only nurse and Dick were with her; she smiled as she remembered how her father refused to believe it was she when she came home so strong and happy.

After that she had always come here for a part of the summer, spending the remaining part at some fashionable watering place. Mrs. Dare was able to see the wisdom of this, although not her own arrangement. Rachel looked young and pretty after her sojourn in the country, and enjoyed society with a zest that took well. Other girls were tired then, and besides, Rachel's best clothes were still

fresh. So after the first year the mother made no objection to the girl's project.

They would miss Dick this year, for he had always been with them before. Dick was aunt Anna's stepson, and Rachel's lifelong slave. But a week ago things had come to a final termination; she told him her refusal was conclusive, and when he declined to believe her, lost her temper and quarreled with Dick the peaceful, who, it must be told, had a great many disagreeable remarks to make in return. Before she had quite recovered her surprise that the worm had turned, he left for the White Mountains with Aunt Anna.

Rachel drummed a little on the window sill as she remembered how useful Dick had always been when they were here, "but then here's Mr. King, and I daresay he will make himself quite as agreeable, and as mamma says, it *is* a comfort."

At this moment Tim, who had evidently returned from the picnic, drove up the lane with the luggage, and the next half hour was spent in changing their traveling gowns and rendering themselves generally presentable for supper; for primitive hours were main-

tained in the old-fashioned farm house, and every one supped promptly at six.

Rachel took more pains with her toilette that evening than she would have cared to acknowledge.

“Yes, I think I can stand it *two* weeks,” thought Philip as she swept into the dining-room, the black lace gown displaying to the best advantage her pale, cameo face. “Jove, what eyes!” as she flashed her gray orbs full upon him, smiling good evening.

Then the father of this quiet household entered, shaking hands with them all, and telling them he was happy to have them here, with a courteous hospitality which surprised Philip. He expressed himself peculiarly, his French accent giving the decidedly American idioms an unfamiliar sound. He kissed Ellen as he passed her, and looked as though he would have kissed his busy wife, but she was hurrying into the kitchen, on culinary thoughts intent, and did not see him approach her.

Henry Bernard felt a great admiration for his wife’s capabilities. He proudly boasted that it was a difficult problem, indeed, which her practical brain could not solve. His lands grew broad, and he was not only willing, but

glad, to tell that it was her active thrift and prudence which had materially added to his possessions.

Still there was a foreign element which never became quite familiar. He would watch her with a curious, amused expression as she moved from cellar to attic, and from attic to cellar again, never tiring while there was still a task before her. His little French mother had been so different, and he smiled, when his eye rested on Ellen, whom he fancied was like her. He could remember her moving quietly through these same rooms, for his father had lived here and tilled these lands before him.

They were all gone now. Gaston had been last, and Henry Bernard drew a little sigh of content when he reflected that Gaston's son had never felt the lack of a parent's care in this his uncle's kindly household. A tall, broad-shouldered fellow he had grown to be, grave and simple-hearted, grateful for the tender affection they had always shown him. For with all her duties, Martha Bernard could find time "to dawdle the children a little," as she expressed it.

Her summer boarders were a source of actual delight to her. It was a gratification to

have her culinary skill duly appreciated, and it certainly paid well. Besides the Dares, she usually had an artist or two, for the beauty of the country was well known, and now and then a clergyman would come for a fortnight or so.

“Are the daisies blooming so early, Ellen?” Rachel asked when she saw a large bunch of them adorned the table. “Last year they were much later.”

“They are in bloom on the cliff; don’t you remember they are always early there?” Ellen answered.

“Sure enough! I had forgotten. We must go after supper and gather some,” and she smiled at Ellen, who was sitting next her.

“My dear,” her mother said, turning from Mrs. Bernard, whom she had been regaling with a minute account of their journey, “I am certain you are too tired to row across the river this evening. You always fancy yourself actually muscular when you come here.”

“May I not row you, Miss Dare?” Philip asked eagerly from across the table. “I will take very good care of them, Mrs. Dare, I promise you.”

“No, I think you had all better wait until

to-morrow ; there is so much danger of malaria on the river, when one is tired, and I am certain Rachel doesn't need those daisies this evening."

"Very well then, to-morrow," and Rachel looked at Ellen as if she were the only other person to be considered.

"I hope that arrangement is not made with the intention of leaving me out. If it is, I object on the spot ; may I not go to-morrow?" and he leaned forward almost anxiously, as he smiled across at her.

Rachel looked at him a second gravely, almost critically, he fancied, before she replied.

"Certainly you may go if you like. We will start quite early, and it's something of a climb to the top of the cliff."

"Climbing doesn't frighten me. That is one thing I can do well, and you certainly will not go before breakfast, will you?" his determination rising as he saw a faint shadow of objection in her face.

"No, not before breakfast ; mamma objects to that," she answered rather indifferently, and turning to Mr. Bernard spoke in praise of the strawberries he handed her.

They sat on the porch that evening, when

supper was finished, and by and by when Henry Bernard rose, remarking "he believed he'd get his pipe," Philip followed him to the west side of the long porch, and smoked with him. The old man's quaint simplicity was charming, and Philip listened with an interest which surprised himself, to the account of his fields and his grain, his wife and his daughter. "That's all that's left now," he said softly. "Father, mother, all the brothers and sisters are gone long ago."

There was a little silence after this, and the old man sat with one arm across his knees, supporting the elbow of the other with the palm of his hand. The moon had risen as they sat here, and the young man was thinking that nothing more could be desired in the landscape, now that it was covered with this soft light.

There was a little stir on the front porch, and soon after some one softly struck a few chords on the piano. "It seemed as if the heavens had laid on earth a kiss," Rachel sang, and for a little while it seemed to Philip it was the voice of the moonlight itself, so gently, so sweetly did it blend with the radiance without.

Presently she finished, and he stirred uneasily as he heard her move quietly from the shadow of the window, and saw a long shade fall across the floor, as she passed out on to the porch again. Rising he strolled slowly down to the river; Henry Bernard's praise of the song annoyed him. He did not want the effect destroyed so soon.

They were entering the house when he returned; he had heard Mrs. Dare's voice declare the dew was falling, as he came up the path. Rachel said good-night soon after, and while she waited in the hall for the candle Ellen had gone to fetch, Philip approached and said:

“Let me thank you, Miss Dare, for the enjoyment your singing gave me. Your voice is the sweetest I have ever heard.”

“I am glad you were pleased,” she said, coolly accepting his unqualified praise in a manner that rather stunned him.

“I hope you will sing often,” he went on; “one could be satisfied with country life forever if they could hear a voice like yours every day.”

“Yes?” she asked, calmly as before. Plainly he could bring no color to the pale face in this

way. "Certainly I will sing often; I am fond of singing."

With this Ellen came with the candles, and Philip found himself a trifle impatient at the interruption.

"Thank you, Ellen. Good-night, Mr. King. Coming mamma?" and a moment later he was reaching out his hand for his own candle.

Ellen's brown eyes were lifted for an instant to his own as he said good-night, and the look of admiration with which he returned her glance, sent a flood of color to her dimpled cheeks.

"Good night," he said again, extending his hand, but Ellen had gone and failed to see this mark of civility.

"What a pretty child that is," he mused as he ascended the stairs, and as he entered his room: "Good heavens, how that girl can sing."

CHAPTER III.

The next morning at eight, Philip came slowly down stairs, wondering whether his neighbors across the hall were still slumbering. As he walked out on the porch where they had been seated the evening before, he saw a boat coming across the river. He dropped into a chair, lazily wondering where they came from and what time they had breakfast in this uncivilized part of creation. "How well that girl rows," he thought, as the boat drew nearer. Just then Mrs. Bernard came hurrying through the hall.

"Ah, good morning, Mr. King. I expect you're just as hungry as can be. Mrs. Dare has her breakfast at half-after eight, but I'll just go right back and give you yours now."

"No, indeed, thanks," Philip answered, "I prefer to wait and take breakfast with the others."

"With the others!" Mrs. Bernard repeated, laughing. "There haint only Mrs. Dare. Look there! Them girls had their breakfast two hours ago."

Philip turned in the direction she pointed, and found the boat had reached the bank,

and its occupants were busied in fastening it to the stake. A moment later they had turned and walked toward the house, and Philip saw to his surprise they were Rachel and Ellen.

“ You are early birds,” he cried, advancing to meet them. “ Did you go without me? Was this really the daisy expedition?” and he looked decidedly crestfallen as he saw their baskets filled with marguerites. “ I hoped *you* would have remembered me, Ellen.”

“ I didn’t forget you,” Ellen began, thoroughly distressed, “ only—”

“ It was my fault, Mr. King,” Rachel interrupted. “ I fancied you would prefer sleep to a jaunt like this. Ellen suggested that we wait until you awoke, but I wouldn’t wait, for the dew would have been gone then, and see, that’s half the beauty,” handing him a bunch sparkling with the tiny drops which still covered them.

“ You were right not to wait for me, but wrong to suppose I preferred sleep. I was sleeping very little after day-break, for the poultry made such an outrageous noise I was tempted to get up and stuff cotton in my ears.”

And he spoke a trifle impatiently, evidently piqued that they had gone without him.

Rachel laughed a little. "You will become accustomed to country sounds presently, and will never notice them. When you eat some of the delicious chicken for breakfast, you will not think the noise so unbearable. There is mamma now," as Mrs. Dare appeared in the doorway; "you will not have long to wait."

"Ah, Mr. King," Mrs. Dare began, when they came nearer, "have you also caught the spirit of early rising? It is positively the most trying thing in this world to one's nerves to have people getting up at such unearthly hours of the morning. I am sure I can't see what's the use of it, and it makes the day so dreadfully long, especially in a place like this. Now, you must admit it makes the day *frightfully* long," and the well-shaped head, with its elaborately arranged gray hair, was turned to one side, while the blue eyes looked at him for an answer.

"I fear the old lady is a coquette," Philip thought, as he returned, smiling:

"You are attributing more virtues to me than are quite necessary. Early rising is not numbered in my catalogue. I am obliged to

confess I was still dreaming while Miss Dare was enjoying the morning air."

"Oh, you were!" ("Was she relieved?" he asked himself.) "Well, I must say I'm happy to know you are not going to give her scandalous conduct any encouragement. Dick is an early riser, and those three would sometimes tramp for hours before respectable people thought of leaving their beds. I am delighted to have some one to take breakfast with me," she added, leading the way into the dining-room.

Philip stood aside, hoping Rachel would pass in, but she did not notice his movement, and, turning from them, stood leaning over the railing.

She was looking well this morning; the exercise had brought a faint flush to her face, and she wore a little triumphant air that the young man failed to understand. That breakfast lasted a long time, he thought, although, as Rachel had told him, the broiled chicken *was* delicious. He feared she would be gone when they had finished, or, at least, change her position, and it was an extremely graceful one. It was only that she added a charm to the landscape that he cared to go again where

she was, he assured himself, for she had certainly taken no trouble to be more than civil when he was with her. Perhaps it was her way though, and he glanced at the flowers she had given him, which were drooping a little in his button-hole. "The mother is not antagonistic, at any rate," he continued, as the little lady chattered away, requiring few answers, as she had the conversation all on her side of the table. He reminded her so of his father, she was telling him; "I knew him when he was just about your age. Really I can't tell you what a handsome man he was then, though I was saying to Rachel last night it's remarkable how much you look like him. I met your mother several times, to; I remember distinctly how she looked on her bridal trip. She was a very pretty girl. Of course she was older than I was. I don't believe I know which you look most like, your father or your mother," and she surveyed him with a charming little air of criticism. "Now, your nose is as much like her's as can be, and she had exactly such eyes. But, then, you know your father also had blue eyes. Do you remember your father?"

"Oh, yes. Very well indeed. I was quite

fifteen when he died. Shan't I give you some more toast?" he asked, with a vain attempt to hurry matters a little.

"Thank you, not another bit," but I would like some marmalade, just a little. Thanks. Now let me tell you a peculiar circumstance which occurred once when your father was at our house. Mr. Dare laughs every time he thinks of it. It always annoys me, too; you never saw such a man to enjoy a joke, no matter how ancient it is. You can fancy how old this is, when I tell you Rachel was just six months old, and—"

"I'm afraid you hain't made out your breakfast," Mrs. Bernard interrupted, entering hastily as Rachel reached that tender age. "Pshaw! you aint eat nothing at all. What'll I get for you?" and she looked really distressed that the last crumb had not disappeared.

"Not a thing, unless Mr. King will have another roll. No? Indeed, the breakfast was very nice. I don't know when I have eaten anything half so delicious. We never see such cream in the city; the coffee is so much better with it."

"Why, Mrs. Dare! I'm just ashamed to

have you talk about that there coffee. There was a fellow here last week, an' he had some new-fangled coffee pots to sell, an' he said, says he, 'It's turrible old-fashioned to use that coffee pot you're a usin', and it don't make the coffee half as good as this here un' of mine. You just give me your'n an' a half a dollar to boot, an' you can have this one,' an' a whole lot more stuff like that, an' fool like I believed him. We haint had a good cup o' coffee sence. I was agoin' to get another pot before you got here, but I haint had a chance yet. I'll send down to St. Benedict this very day, when Ben goes to the postoffice. Henry he just laughed at me; he don't believe in peddlers."

In the midst of this Philip made his escape, but Rachel was gone, and the place where she had been standing had a singularly vacant appearance, as though something which had always been there was missing. The railing was warm when he touched it. "She stood here a long time," he thought. How quiet it was! The silence rather oppressed him when he thought of it. He could hear a man shouting to his team as he passed down the long furrow of corn. But the sound grew

fainter, and Philip mechanically bent his head to listen until it was quite gone.

After awhile the noise came slowly back, and he could see the heads bobbing up and down between the green stalks. It aroused him to a sense of industry. How much time he had wasted that this man had improved. "If artists worked at their easels as hard as farmers at their plows, we would have better pictures in consequence. I think I'll see what the old lady has for me in the way of a studio," and he re-entered the dining-room where the two were still conversing, to the apparent gratification of a neat-looking girl, who was carrying away the breakfast things.

"We have been talking about you, Mr. King," Mrs. Dare said, as he opened the door. "You should never leave two women alone together; they are certain to talk."

"I feel that my reputation is safe in your hands," he answered smiling. "I am sure you would only say kind things."

She gave him a keen little glance before she replied: "Not always, but in this case it happens to be not unkind. We were saying it was fortunate you were here, for we should

have missed Dick very much more without you."

"Ahem," Mrs. Bernard coughed. "Mary Ann, you just hurry up with them dishes; its perfectly scandalous the way you stand."

"That infernal Armstrong again!" Philip thought. "It's getting to be too much like dead men's shoes to be exactly agreeable."

"They also serve who only stand and wait," he quoted aloud. "It's something to know that one is able to fill a small part of a vacuum."

"Oh, quite a large part," said Mrs. Dare politely. "You see Dick is sister Anna's step-son, although he really could not be fonder of us all if he were really related to us. Now could he, Mrs. Bernard?"

"No indeed," she responded, "especially Miss Rachel."

"I havn't a doubt of it," said Philip rather dryly. "By the way, I think I know Mrs. Armstrong, although I have never had the pleasure of meeting her son."

"I dare say you do," Mrs. Dare said, with a quick little nod. Anna positively knows every one worth knowing."

“How fortunate then I know her, for not to know her ‘would argue myself unknown.’”

“Sure enough, I didn’t think of that,” and she gave a pleasant little laugh as she picked up her book, and prepared to leave the room.

“Mrs. Bernard, I have not seen the studio you were good enough to promise me. This beautiful country makes me feel like work,” Philip said, after he had opened the door for Mrs. Dare.

“Now, that’s so, I havn’t; come right along with me an’ I’ll show you,” and she led the way up stairs with as much alacrity as was consistent with her bulk.

Philip’s gentle courtesy had pleased Martha Bernard, and instead of taking him up to the attic where other artists had gone before him, she led the way down the wide hall, and opened a door next to the room Philip already occupied.

“This was my little Georgie’s room; he died six years ago this fall,” she said simply, as they stepped into the little square room.

“I never give no artist this here room before, because they al’ays dab things up so, ‘an have so many greasy rags an’ things lyin’

round over the floor; but you don't look like one of that kind."

"I may prove worse than any of them," he laughed, as he glanced around the room. "Really I am afraid to undertake to keep this carpet clean. What would you say if I asked you for that space in the hall, by the front window," he said, as a bright idea suddenly struck him. "There is no clean carpet there to spoil, and I have some curtain stuff with me that I can draw across there to separate it from the rest of the hall. I am positively pining for that square north window."

"Just suit yourself," she answered, laughing at his beseeching tone. "It don't matter to me which you take. I'll send Mary Ann up to help you," and she closed the door of the room she had opened, with a little sigh of relief, at this new arrangement.

In a little while he had a studio, which he surveyed with infinite satisfaction. Not a mere make-shift of a studio in which to work for a few days, but an elaborate atelier.

Philip's intimates laughed at the traps with which he always encumbered himself, but he fancied they were an aid to industry, and they were certainly a comfort. He was thinking

of this as he stood looking at the result of his labor late that afternoon. "Nothing could be easier to carry than these curtains and rugs," he answered himself, "and as for the gimcracks, if they are only tumbled in among these soft things they seldom break."

Mrs. Bernard had given him a table and a couple of old high-backed chairs; besides these, the rich Persian hangings, the thick rugs which half covered the oiled floor, the bright cushions and scarfs and a few pieces of bric-a-brac were his own. And they thoroughly bespoke the fact that Philip knew how best to use his wealth to gratify his tastes.

"I'll do that little bit this evening!" he exclaimed, snatching up a brush, and turning from the window to the blank canvas. "I think old Steve would like that."

He had scarcely more than pressed the colors on to the palatte, than Rachel's voice arose from the parlor below, singing some weird melody in a minor key, echoing strangely through the silent house. Philip actually dropped the brush in his astonishment, and listened eagerly until she had finished.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, when the last

note had died away, "what a voice! I wonder if she'd care if I should go down stairs."

He evidently decided she would not, for he immediately pushed back his easel, and went down to her. She was singing again, and did not turn when he entered; and he dropped into the nearest chair to listen to the perfect flood of melody. Presently the song was ended, and still she gave no indication that she knew he was there, but sat running her fingers lightly over the keys.

"Miss Dare," said Philip coming up to her rather suddenly, and speaking in a quick, eager voice, "do you know you sing like an angel?"

"No," she answered briefly with a slow smile, but without moving even her eyes in his direction.

"Surely this is not the first time you have heard that," he continued, anxious that she should say something to him. "Every one who hears you must think as I do."

"Yes, I have heard it before," and the slender fingers moved a tiny bit faster.

"You look incredulous; you think I exaggerate," he suggested.

“Perhaps not; I have never heard an angel sing,” she answered with perfect gravity.

“Then listen to your own voice some day,” and he leaned forward to look into her face, wondering at her quiet unconsciousness. She looked up at him then and smiled, and he was able to see that the smile meant amusement rather than pleasure, as she listened to his praise.

“I shall feel afraid to sing again for any one who has an acquaintance with the heavenly choirs,” she said. “Do you ever really see them as well as hear them. Was it an angel announcing its presence by pounding in the hall all day.”

“Not unless you call Mary Ann and me angels,” he answered laughing, “and there might be a diversity of opinion on that point.”

“I am certain Mary Ann is,” and she laughed with him. “She has such a happy faculty of turning up in unexpected places.”

“Not a day over twenty,” Philip assured himself, as he responded: “It must be an ungenerous spirit which bids you draw the line at Mary Ann. Was it accident or design?”

“One has to draw it somewhere, and Mary Ann is an excellent stopping point. I am re-

minded though it must have been something more than human that manufactured those wonderful curtains you have hung in the hall. I quite envy you."

"Do you like it?" he inquired. "You must come up and see my rugs and cushions, if that sort of thing pleases you. I have what Mrs. Bernard calls my 'study-o' there. I am anxious to get to work."

"What an anomaly!" she exclaimed "An industrious artist! Are you always so energetic?"

"If it were bread and butter for six, or even one, I was working for, I dare say I would be as lazy as the worst of them. As it is, it helps to kill the enemy."

"I see," she said, slowly, "it's only to amuse yourself."

"No, not quite so bad as that, for I suppose I would paint if I were rich or poor. But if I were obliged to do it, I would, as a natural consequence, be obliged to find some other amusement. Do you see?" Then, as she did not respond at once, he continued: "When I hear you sing, it almost makes me think lightly of my art. I wish it were possible to paint such a voice."

“Is it not enough to hear it?”

“Yes, if I could hear it always; but I am limited to a very small taste only now and then.”

“That should satisfy you,” she said, gravely; “a great many persons do not have that.”

Philip looked at her with a little of the amazement he felt displaying itself in his blue eyes. Was it that she had so much conceit or so little? She made a very fair picture seated there, the light from the window back of them reflected into the pale face by the music on the rack before her.

“I believe I’ll try her on something else,” he thought, her indifference putting him on his mettle. Resting his elbow on the piano, he leaned forward, and began rather timidly: “I should like to sketch you, Miss Dare, just as you are now, in this white frock, and seated at the piano.”

“Would you?” she asked simply, meeting his eyes with a direct, steady gaze. “I should like first to see how you paint. Suppose you do Mary Ann, and show me.”

“Ah, now you are laughing,” Philip said, with a slight heightening of color. “Mary Ann would not do at all. I must have inspi-

ration from my model. I don't paint mere portraits."

"Then you should surely paint Mary Ann," she said, with a gravity which almost caused him to believe she meant it, and, rising, gathered up her scattered music.

"Won't you sing again?" he pleaded. "I fear I have stopped you."

"Not now," she answered graciously enough. "Later, perhaps. Look," pointing to the tall old clock in the corner, "it's half-past five, and here is the mail."

Philip went to the door to meet the boy, and, returning, handed her two letters, wondering if that everlasting Armstrong had written the one bearing the masculine chirography. She gave no indication, however, as to the writer, simply smiling as he gave them, and passed slowly upstairs with them in her hand, still unopened.

CHAPTER IV.

That evening, after everyone had said good night, Philip sat smoking at the window for a long time. They had gone for a walk after supper, Mrs. Dare, Rachel, Ellen and himself, and as he sat here thinking it over, a sweet, pale face, with bright red lips, and dark gray eyes, kept floating up in the rings of smoke.

"I can't quite make her out," he mused. "I don't know whether its innocence or art. If it's art, it is certainly the best I ever saw, and if it's innocence, she doesn't get it from the old lady. Whatever it is, it's charming," he added some minutes after, as he rose and knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"I think I should like a row myself in the morning," he remarked half aloud, before he went to sleep.

Philip felt a trifle foolish the next morning, as he glanced at the door opposite his own, and wondered if Rachel were up.

"Well, I declare, Mr. King, if you ain't ahead this morning," Mrs. Bernard said when she saw him. "Miss Rachel she hain't up yet. We're just agoin' to have breakfast,

Father an' me an' the men; will you set down an' take a bite with us?"

He courteously declined her invitation, laughing a little as he told her he was going out to look for an appetite, that he might dispose of a greater amount when the breakfast hour arrived, ending with a little hint at her excellent cooking which caused her face to fairly beam.

"Just eat when you please," she said, smoothing down the gingham apron, which almost covered her. "Your breakfast is a waitin' whenever you want it."

"It's some satisfaction to cook for Mr. King," she said when she reached the dining room again. "He knows how to appreciate things. You can al'ays tell what folks is made of by their actions."

Henry Bernard promptly assented, as he usually did to any and all assertions his wife made, but it was with a hearty good will he answered now, the interest the young man had displayed the other evening still fresh in his memory.

Philip strolled out onto the lawn, slightly bored, and wondering if he had not rather overdone the thing. For an hour he walked

up and down, feeling his good humor gradually slipping away from him, as he struck at the tall grasses here and there, or the fluffy head of a dandelion gone to seed, with the switch he had broken from the willows on the edge of the river.

Presently his waiting was rewarded. He saw a gleam of light blue descending the stairs with rather more rapidity than was Rachel's custom to move.

"At last!" he exclaimed, going to meet her. "Why, it's Ellen," he added rather blankly to himself. Still, it was someone, and after one has roamed about aimlessly for an hour, with nothing particular to think of, one is glad of any human being for company.

"I have been waiting a perfect eternity for some one to take a row with me," he said, after he had bidden her good morning. "I was beginning to get very tired of my own company."

"Miss Rachel said she wouldn't go this morning, so she didn't come down early," Ellen answered, taking it for granted Rachel was the some one meant.

"Why didn't you come, then?" he asked

gently. "You know you promised to take me yesterday, and didn't."

"Indeed, I didn't mean it," she said earnestly.

"No, I know you didn't," he declared, smiling at her serious face; "but you must really treat me better. Come, now, and take a row with me," he said, moved by a sudden impulse, noting the child's delicious color.

"Oh, no, I can't," she answered. "I must stem the berries for breakfast."

"Wouldn't you like to go? — would you rather stem the berries?" he questioned softly.

"Yes, I would like it," she hesitated.

"Then come; you will spoil your fingers with the berries, and besides, it isn't polite to let me go alone the first time. Won't you come?" going up to her with a beseeching glance, before which her eyes were shyly downcast.

"If mother says I may," she finally answered, and ran into the house for permission.

"Of course, child, run along," he heard the mother assent, and he felt himself unable to account for the satisfaction it afforded him. He fancied that Miss Dare had intentionally avoided him both mornings, and, although he

could not help feeling a little sore, he admired the clever manner in which she had accomplished her purpose. It was a gratification that the little one was willing to go.

Ellen reappeared in a little while, hastily tying the strings of her broad hat.

“Mother says Mary Ann can stem the berries,” she explained; “aren’t you glad?”

“Very glad,” he answered gravely; “I should have been disappointed if you could not have come.”

“Which way shall we go?” he asked, as he picked up the oars and pushed off.

“Oh, this way. The falls are down that way and we can’t row far.”

“Are there falls? I must see them; but not this morning,” he added, reassuringly, as she looked startled.

“They’re only a mile down. We often walk there; father won’t let us row down, although he says it isn’t very dangerous, except when the river’s high. Two men were drowned there last spring,” the latter sentence spoken in a subdued whisper.

“Bless me! what an excellent place for a ghost!” exclaimed Philip, mischievously. “We must go down some dark night.”

“Oh, no! I don’t believe there is any ghost; it’s so near St. Benedict, you know, people would have seen it.”

“Is that St. Benedict?” he asked, nodding in the direction of the tall spire rising above the hills.

“Yes, that’s where we go to church. Miss Rachel goes sometimes to sing, but she isn’t a Catholic.”

“Are you?” he asked.

“Oh, yes,” as if that were a very peculiar question indeed—every one ought to know that. “Father is, too, and mother. She’s not French though, and wasn’t always a Catholic.”

“Do you go down to church often?” he asked, finding she needed a question now and then.

“When Gaston’s home I do. How clear the water is this morning!”

“Ah, ha! and who is Gaston? A sweetheart?” he questioned, leaning forward to look in her blushing face.

“It’s *cousin* Gaston,” she answered a little impatiently. “He lives here, only he’s down at Martone’s now, because John broke his leg, and there wasn’t any one to help except Joe, and he’s only fourteen.”

“Ah, I see,” said Philip, unable to feel a great amount of interest in the domestic arrangements of the Martones. “Are those white flowers I see up there, rhododendrons, Ellen?” motioning in the direction of the cliff they were approaching.

“Oh, yes, and Miss Rachel and I wanted some yesterday so badly, but we couldn’t get up.”

“I should think not, if that is the only approach,” he said, looking at the steep side of the rock, which arose directly out of the water.

“There’s another way, around by the road, but that’s three miles.”

“I think I will get some of them,” he announced, suddenly pulling with a strong stroke directly to the base of the cliff. “Sit still until I come back.”

Ellen looked frightened, but before she could think what to say to prevent him, he had thrown his coat in the bottom of the boat and was gone, drawing himself rapidly upward by means of overhanging rocks and branches.

Ellen watched for a little while, then, as she saw him going on higher and higher, cov-

ered her face with her hands, shivering, afraid to look, still feeling that she must know what had become of him.

It seemed to her she had waited hours when she was startled by something gently touching her, and uncovering her face with an uncertain horror, saw a great bunch of rhododendrons lying at her feet. Glancing up quickly, there was Philip leaning over the edge of the cliff, laughing down at her, calling something she was unable to understand.

She saw then that the boat had drifted away from the cliff a little, and guessing that was what he had meant, pulled it back to where it had been before.

Ah, now he was coming down again, and Ellen remembered that this was the most difficult part of the performance. She saw him start, swing himself lightly and rapidly from one point to the next, till suddenly he paused, reached for the stone he had apparently expected to find, then drew himself back and hesitated a moment. He glanced down the side of the cliff, and poor little Ellen saw that he was preparing for some unusual effort. Oh, what was it? and covering her face once more, prayed silently.

A few moments after she felt the boat lurch suddenly, and heard him exclaim brightly:

“Ah, Ellen, did I frighten you?” And as he leaned towards her and gently removed her hands: “Why, poor child, how pale you are. I was a brute not to know it would frighten you.”

With this, Ellen’s sense of relief was so great, the tears gathered in her eyes, and, to Philip’s dismay, sobbed aloud. Taking her hand, he tried to soothe her, calling himself all sorts of hard names for frightening her. To his intense relief her sobbing ceased in a short time, and seizing the oars he rowed swiftly towards the opposite bank.

“You havn’t even looked at the rhododendrons,” he said, presently, as her agitation subsided. “See what quantities there are. Don’t you care for them after all my trouble?”

“They are lovely,” she answered, taking some in her hand, “but I was so frightened. I was afraid you would fall.”

“No, there was little danger. I know how to climb and swim. Had I slipped, the distance was short, and I should have fallen near the boat. But of course you didn’t know that.”

"I am sorry I cried," she said, flushing hotly as he only laughed a little.

Mrs. Dare and Rachel were at breakfast when he entered, having apparently been seated only a few minutes.

"Here they air, an' ef they haint got some of that there laurel that grows over on the high cliff; however did you get it?" Mrs. Bernard exclaimed as Philip was distributing his flowers, and saying good morning.

"We climbed for it," he laughed. "Excellent exercise, wasn't it, Ellen?" as she entered after him, evidently having disappeared to remove the traces of tears.

"Ellen said you were wishing for some, and I thought I should enjoy a climb on a morning like this," he continued in a low tone as he handed a bunch of the fairest to Rachel.

She thanked him simply, but her smile was radiant, and Philip seated himself, wishing the cliff had been twice as high.

"I am prepared to do justice to the muffins, I assure you, Mrs. Bernard. This clear air makes one ravenous," he announced as she passed him a plateful, hot and flaky.

"I see you also have caught the fever of early rising, Mr. King. Positively it's quite

beyond my comprehension. I wouldn't like to say at what unearthly hour Rachel was up this morning, for fear I wouldn't be believed. I thought she was going rowing. I know I heard her moving around her room before the sun was up. Now weren't you, Rachel?"

"The sun was quite up, mamma. I had letters to write," the girl answered with the faintest show of impatience, and a still fainter show of color, as Philip looked directly at her.

"Now isn't that ridiculous?" Mrs. Dare continued. "What on earth she has to do all day, I am certain I don't know. It's the greatest pleasure for me to have letters to write; they help so to fill up the day. I write whole volumes to my friends while I am here. But then Rachel never does what other people do. I would sometimes say to her when she was little, 'Rachel, you are the strangest child I ever saw,' and she would answer me, 'Well, mamma, God made me.'"

The subject of this speech sat very quietly while it was in progress, and at its close said calmly:

"Mr. King will discover my mental deficiencies only to soon, mamma; don't you think we might be spared the trouble of telling

him? In that case he will have the satisfaction of having made a discovery."

She had risen as she said this, and passing out of the dining-room, laid her hand caressingly on her mother's shoulder.

CHAPTER V.

Philip was unaccustomed to being surprised by his own actions; still it was something very nearly like that emotion with which he regarded himself one afternoon almost two weeks after his arrival at the farm. He had glanced at the calendar a moment ago, and not until then had he realized how long he had been here.

"I didn't think I could stand it this long; it must be that the air is particularly bracing," he assured himself. "It's a blessing it is, for there's plenty to keep me busy here a month or two longer. I'd send for Steve, but I'm afraid he'd make love to Ellen. Beauty unadorned is his style. It wouldn't be fair when they've been so good to me," he added after a moment's hesitation, and he shook his head decidedly against sending for Steve.

A stronger bond of friendship existed between Stephen Hendley and Philip King than was usual between second cousins. Philip was the older by a year or two, but both habitually forgot that fact, and Steve took the initiative in every affair of importance. Their calling was the same, and when in town they enjoyed Philip's luxurious studio together, for Steve often declared "Phil furnished the capital and he supplied the experience of the firm."

"No," Philip said again, as he heard Ellen's laugh from below, "I shall not send for Steve."

He had seen comparatively little of Miss Dare since he had been here. He could not determine whether it was indifference with which she regarded him or actual dislike. Her manner was always gentle, and even gracious, but the mortifying fact that her interest in him was small was perfectly apparent.

Her voice was a source of great pleasure to him, and he had formed the habit of presenting himself at the parlor every afternoon at four, when she practiced. Sometimes they conversed at this hour, but oftener he was

silent, and he listened to her singing without interruption.

He seldom saw her at any other time. He had painted diligently, and had the satisfaction to know he had never in his life done better work. While he worked she was reading or sewing with her mother, and frequently Ellen, on the porch or out under the trees. They made a pretty picture there, and he often smiled as he caught the sound of their voices, or heard a burst of laughter, so merry he could not refrain from laughing with them.

Ellen had grown talkative these days, and Rachel sometimes marveled at her bright chatter about the convent, the nuns, the girls, and, most of all, Father Dutton, and what he said and did.

Occasionally they were unusually gay, and Philip could not resist the impulse to join them. But this was not frequent, for he was able to see that his presence was a restraint. Mrs. Dare seemed always glad to have him with them, and monopolized the conversation, which was not exactly what he had come for. He had grown to feel quite an affection for this bright little lady, for, with all her garrulity, she was extremely kind, and he was grate-

ful for it. Still, it would have been a satisfaction if she would not always do the talking when her daughter was present.

This very afternoon he had gone down to them, as they worked, and found Mrs. Dare had gone to her room. He had not realized what an aid she had been to the general comfort of the party, for, now that she was gone, no one seemed to have anything to say. It was decidedly annoying to produce always such a state of affairs, especially when one was not accustomed to it, and after a few vain attempts to restore the former good cheer, he left, decidedly cross with them and himself.

Things would not go right after that ; colors would not mix as it was their bounden duty to mix, and somehow every line seemed out of drawing.

“Pshaw!” he exclaimed savagely, an hour or so after, “I’m not in the humor to work to-day!” and he dashed down the brush and pushed the easel into the furthest corner.

“Four o’clock,” he said, looking at his watch ; “time I stopped anyhow.”

Immediately after he heard a door close down the hall, and a soft rustle as Rachel passed down stairs.

"You are as punctual as I am," she said as he entered. "Is four o'clock the end of your working day?"

"My working day is ended when I am tired," he answered smiling; "but it did not end soon enough to-day, for I spoiled my best sketch by keeping at it when I didn't feel like it. You must be very good to me this afternoon, for, in consequence of my disappointment, I am cross."

"And you expect me to coax you back to good humor?" she asked. "You set me a thankless task."

"Not so thankless as you suppose," he returned. "Think of the subsequent remorse I shall feel to know I have thoroughly lost my temper."

"You have already lost it, according to your own confession, and I don't feel called on to interfere. Besides," turning the music before her, "I doubt my ability to do as you ask."

She had not intended that; it slipped out before she could prevent it, for she knew his answer now would necessarily be a compliment. Still he did not answer as she had expected.

He came a step nearer, and scanned her

face earnestly for a moment before replying.

"I would be a brute if you couldn't." He then said gently:

"You are skillful." She smiled after an instant, during which she turned and regarded him seriously; "your pause was very effective."

"You never give me credit for being in earnest," he said a little impatiently.

"You are mistaken," she returned gravely. "I think you frequently believe yourself to be in earnest."

"I should have been better pleased had you let it stand as it was. It is not a pleasant idea that you think I only *believe* myself in earnest."

"Very well then, we shall let it stand as it was," she answered quietly, beginning to play.

She was thinking of a letter lying up stairs in her portfolio she had received in answer to one of her own.

"You are right, my dear," it read. "I do know Philip King, although I have not seen him for four years. I met him the first winter I was out, and almost lost my heart to him. He was as handsome as a picture then, and perfectly fascinating, but his conceit was some-

thing terrible. He fancied every girl in love with him; but of course you have already discovered that pleasant little trait, for it predominates. I would consider myself doing less than my duty if I did not tell you something I know about him. I have it from excellent authority that a fisherman's daughter in Nantucket drowned herself on his account. They tell me he was guilty of no actual crime in the affair; that he simply trifled with her affections.

“I was able to match the silks without the least trouble; will send them to-day. With a great deal of love for aunt Kate, I remain your affectionate cousin.

“KATHERINE BLOUNT.

“P. S.—There was some doubt expressed as to whether it was Philip King or his cousin; but I have excellent reasons to believe it was the former.

K. B.”

Katherine had been married two years, and was devoted to her husband; but the fact that she had once given her heart, unasked and without return, still rankled in her bosom.

Her account of Philip had impressed Rachel unpleasantly. It did not accord with the opinion she had already formed, and she was

sorry Katherine had told her. "Although it was some satisfaction," she told herself, "to let him know there was one girl who had not fallen a victim to his charms."

Philip did not speak again for a long time; finally, when there was a pause in her singing, he approached the piano, and said rather suddenly:

"Miss Dare, will you tell me why you are antagonistic to me?"

She looked at him coldly, without the faintest shade of surprise.

"You are mistaken," she answered; "I rarely take the trouble to be antagonistic."

"It would make me very happy if I am mistaken. I fancied you had some objection to me, for you are so often silent when I enter your presence, and—"

He had said this quickly, eagerly, and hesitated, with a rising inflection in his voice, as if he were expecting an explanation, or at least an answer.

"It is difficult to remember always why one is silent," she answered frigidly. "I am unable to account for my conduct; my memory serves me poorly."

“Now, I have offended you,” he said, really distressed.

“No, I am not offended,” she returned more agreeably, “but I think it is a good time to stop, while both of us keep our tempers.”

“Not until you consent to bury the hatchet,” he said, leaning forward until his eyes were on a level with hers. “You have never shaken hands with me yet,” and he extended his wistfully.

“Have I not?” she asked, smiling back at him, and in the instant she hesitated, a cold, dripping figure, which had floated before her eyes whenever she was with him vanished, and she laid her slender hand silently in his.

“Now!” Philip exclaimed triumphantly, “we are friends; and,” as he kept her hand in his a second longer than necessary, “you must do something to prove your friendship. You must come and see my studio.”

“Yes,” she answers, smiling still, “I will come to-morrow, if you like.”

“Will you really?” he eagerly asked. “I should like it better than anything.”

He seemed very young to her this afternoon, quite boyish in fact, and something about him

reminded her of Dick; "although he must be much older than Dick," she told herself.

"Now, if you will only sing for me I can ask no other earthly happiness," he continued, settling himself comfortably in the huge wooden rocking-chair.

"You are easily satisfied," she returns, with a little laugh, then sings as he asks until the clock strikes five, and the boy enters with the mail.

"Don't go," he entreats, as she gathers her music together.

"But mamma must have her mail," she answers hesitating.

"You won't come back if you take it. Let me give it to her," reaching for it as she stands in the doorway.

"He looks too confident," she reflects, then aloud, "No, I think I had better take them myself, Mr. King, thanks," and she sweeps past, leaving him looking after her rather blankly.

CHAPTER VI.

"Mrs. Dare, I have persuaded your daughter to come and visit me this morning. Will you come if she has not changed her mind?" Philip asked across the table the next morning, thinking how pretty those simple bands of white hair made the old lady look.

"I'd love to come; I delight in a studio, and have been actually dying for you to ask us," she answered promptly.

"Lay the blame on Miss Dare," he replied gayly. "I have asked her a dozen times, and have met—well, not quite with a blank refusal, but almost. I should have asked you before, but that was a discouragement you see, and it made me timid."

"Ah, that's so like Rachel; one can never tell just what she intends to do. Sometimes she quite dotes on art. I assure you she really is very fond of art, but she does seem to have a prejudice against a studio. There was Mr. Clarke last winter who asked us over and over again to come, and do you think she would go? No indeed, and she positively gave the poor man no excuse, leaving me to invent one the best I could."

"It was quite unnecessary, I assure you, mamma, I didn't want to give him an excuse," Rachel mildly suggested.

"No, I know you didn't, and that made it all the worse, for he really was a charming young man. His manner was the loveliest thing I ever saw. But Rachel said she would have liked him better if he had had no manner. And his pictures were excellent; every one praised his pictures, and that 'Passing Thought' was really fine. You know him, don't you, Robert Clarke? Ah, yes, I supposed you did. And don't you know it was the most peculiar thing, so many thought that 'Passing Thought' looked like Rachel. But of course it didn't. Some people are so queer about seeing resemblances."

"I fear you will be disappointed if it is my work you want to see," Philip said in the first pause. "I have some Persian and East Indian stuff to show you, and two or three bits of colonial bric-a-brac that may possibly interest you, but a very few sketches, and those have been made since I have been here. I have been working already this morning, endeavoring to repair the damage done by my impatience yesterday," smiling across at Rachel.

"Will eleven suit you?" Rachel asked after a while. "I have letters to write this morning and can't come before."

"Perfectly," he answered, and wondered as he left if it were to the man who had written her the first day, she intended to write. He had noticed several letters in the same hand since then, and she always hurried up stairs a little faster when they came. The boy came with the mail while she was singing, and Philip had sometimes an opportunity to observe the character of the writing.

"Nonsense! what a fool I am! as if it made any difference to me to whom she writes!" he exclaimed angrily as eleven struck, and he found himself wondering at their non-appearance.

Hearing a step in the hall, he drew aside the hanging, expecting to see his delinquent guests. It was Ellen, and as he was about to turn back a little impatiently, he noticed how pretty the child was looking in an immense white apron and a quaint little cap, which protected her curly, golden hair from dust.

His sudden appearance startled her, for he had drawn the curtain noiselessly, and not until he spoke was she aware of his presence.

“Oh, Mr. King! I didn’t see you, and she stooped to pick up the huge feather duster she had dropped in her confusion.

“Let me pick it up,” Philip said. “There! No, I don’t think I will give it to you,” taking her hand as she reached for it, “until you tell me where you have been all these days. Why, I have scarcely seen you since the morning we went rowing. You have quite deserted me; what does it mean?” coming a step nearer to admire the pretty, downcast face.

“I’ve been so busy,” she faltered. “I was over to see Father Dutton twice, and — and mother needed me,” gaining a little courage as she went on.

“Happy Father Dutton!” and he smiled down on the brown eyes that were for a moment upturned to his. “And didn’t you think I needed you?” with a voice which expressed more tenderness than he would have believed, she was such a pretty child.

“Oh, no, sir! Mary Ann dusts your room; doesn’t she do it right?” looking up anxiously.

“Beautifully, but not half as well as you would, I am sure,” he answered, still smiling gently; “and besides, I want to make a sketch of you. You look like a Breton peasant girl

in this gown and cap, only prettier. No, leave it on, you don't know how pretty it is," as she put her hand to her head to snatch off the cap.

"I am afraid you are laughing at me," she said shyly.

"No, indeed; and here comes your mother; I shall ask if I may," as that worthy lady came panting up the stairs, a quantity of snowy towels over each arm.

"I want you to let me make a sketch of Ellen, Mrs. Bernard," he said as she came to where they were standing. "I know you would like one of her, though I won't promise you it will be as pretty as the original," smiling with the boyish expression customary with him when particularly anxious for anything.

"Why, law, Mr. King! of course you may," the mother answered, smiling back, having long ago fallen a victim to Philip's ready smile. "I'm sure we'd only be too proud, an' father'd like it better 'an anything. Why don't you speak up, Ellen, and say you'd like it? An' take off that cap, child, it disfigures you."

"Oh, no, it doesn't," Philip said quickly. "Can't you see what a pretty frame the lace

edge makes for her face? It's just the thing that suits her; do let her keep it on."

"Well, I don't know but it does look well on her," Mrs. Bernard answered, rather reluctantly, "but then she only puts it on to dust in."

"I went all the way to France to sketch girls in just such caps," said Philip earnestly, "and I didn't find one as pretty as Ellen in the cap you scorn."

"Why, is that so?" she asked, viewing the cap with new respect. "The Sisters made that for Ellen, and they're most all French. It'll please father, if you think she looks French."

The wearer of the article under discussion stood bashfully playing with the regained dust-brush, quite unable to restrain a little pleased smile at the complimentary turn of the conversation.

"Then I am to consider it settled," said Philip, anxiously, as Mrs. Dare and Rachel came down the hall with the evident intention of fulfilling their engagement.

"Oh, yes indeed, thank you! Ellen, why don't you say thank you, child?"

"I am the one to say thank you," he said,

laughing, as Ellen murmured what she had been told to say. "Consider that you are conferring a favor on me," and he finished with a bow which, in Martha Bernard's opinion, left absolutely nothing to be desired.

"At last!" he exclaimed, turning to the new comers, noting at the same time the marked contrast they presented to the two he had been conversing with. Rachel's tall figure, and sweet, dignified face was strangely different from Ellen's diminutive beauty. The little one has character enough, notwithstanding," Philip thought, and almost smiled as Mrs. Dare's slender figure made Mrs. Bernard's bulk appear twice as great. "Strong face, though," he thought, referring to Martha Bernard.

"I feared you had deserted me," was all he said, as these ideas were chasing each other through his brain.

"Ah, no; are we so late as that?" Rachel asked with gentle graciousness. Philip thought he could almost find it in his heart to adore her when she wore this air, so grave and sweet it was.

"By actual measurement, twenty minutes," pulling out his watch; "but it seemed longer.

Will you come now?" and he led the way as he spoke. "Mrs. Bernard, you and Ellen must come with us. We are only intending to inspect my modest studio."

"Certainly you must," Mrs. Dare insisted. "It will seem quite like a party, and I do love to do anything with a party. Ah!" as they stepped inside, Philip first to welcome them, "no wonder you were anxious we should come. You would be very selfish to have all this to yourself. Do you always take these things with you when you go any place?" Her quick eye had moved rapidly around, and comprehended readily the number of articles which filled the room.

"Yes, if I intend remaining long. These traps don't amount to much, and I seldom have anything broken. They are very little trouble, and I can not do good work in a bare room," and he looked not illy pleased at their admiration.

"What cushions!" and Mrs. Dare sank onto a pile of bright-colored Indian pillows with a sigh of contentment. "These things would make one lazy in a very short time," she added, sniffing at their delicious perfume.

"And they incite me to industry," Philip

said, as he stopped for a moment the explanation of a curious jar Rachel had admired. "Look at this bowl, Miss Dare," he went on. "I prize this one more than that, although its intrinsic value is considerably less. Wait until I take out this trash," and he removed a bunch of laurel, glancing curiously at Rachel as he did so.

"You see," he said, "there is a little of it almost fresh yet."

"Yes," she returned, "I was sorry to notice this morning that its best days are past."

"Have you some of it still?" he asked quickly.

"There was some in my room early this morning. I did not notice whether it had been removed later or not," she answered carelessly. "What a delicate color it has," as she stuck the sprig he handed her, from the brightest of it, in her belt.

"There is plenty more where this came from," he said lightly; "the cliff is covered with it."

"I know it," she answered with a little laugh, "but the cliff is a straight rock, fifty feet high."

"Nevertheless, this came from there," he persisted, as she bent to examine the bowl.

"There are few men who would dare climb such a height for so trifling a reward," and she turned her beautiful eyes upon his face, with an expression he could not entirely interpret; still he smiled quietly to himself as he prosed away about his hangings and his bric-a-brac, not displeased with what he had been able to read in those clear gray depths. A moment later an exclamation from Mrs. Dare called their attention to the farthest corner.

"Just look, here we all are! Do you see, Mrs. Bernard? There you are with your big darning basket; and do you see Rachel reading, and Ellen's blue dress, and Ponto, and there I am with the embroidery frame!"

Philip made a little gesture of impatience, and crossed quickly over to them.

"I had hoped you would not see that," he said, with a touch of annoyance. "That is why I drew this bit of silk before it. Not that I care in the least for myself," he hastened to explain, "but I feared you would not like the idea of being sketched so unceremoniously."

"You have paid us a very delicate compliment; you have done it so beautifully, hasn't

he, Rachel?" as her daughter approached the easel.

On the square piece of canvas before her was the view Philip had from this very window. The river, the hills, the trees, the rocks, even the boat was there. Half way down the green slope, under the shadow of the great oak, where they usually sat in the mornings, she saw the group which had attracted her mother's notice. There was Rachel herself, rather apart and somewhat more prominent than the others, seated on a huge rock reading. She remembered distinctly what she had read when she saw her position. On the rock beside her lay a bunch of laurel Philip had brought her that morning. "I wish he had left that out," she thought, a little impatiently, then wondered why. A sudden admiration for the man's ability arose, when she realized how clever were the other figures. "What an eye for detail he has," she thought, as she still looked in silence.

"Well, I'm sure nothing could be better," Mrs. Bernard declared. "Just look at that there river, and if here hain't that very cheer Gaston made, an' I told Ellen not to leave it out there, for it was a sight to be seen; but,

somehow, it looks pretty in the picture. An' there's the girls' hats a-lyin' on that old log where they al'ays lay 'em, and my blue gingham sun bonnet. Law! I wish now I'd a-wore my white one."

Philip was intently watching Rachel's face, a little afraid of what her opinion of his impertinence would be.

After a long scrutiny, she turned, gave him a sharp little glance of inquiry, and said simply:

"Mamma is right; you have certainly complimented us. The group adds to the attraction of the picture, but it would still be lovely without it."

"I will paint it out, if you say," he began reluctantly, picking up a brush as he read disapproval in her face. "I should have asked your permission, but in the meantime your positions would have changed, and you were so charming as you were;" and with a little sigh of regret he moved toward the easel.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Dare, "you shall not touch it. I am too proud of the fact that I have helped make a picture to be willing to be painted out of it. And, besides, I know Rachel doesn't care. You don't under-

stand her. Really, she is so peculiar," and Rachel's mother perched her head on one side, with an earnest look of protestation which reminded Philip more than ever of a canary bird.

"Shall I leave it as it is?" he asked Rachel in a low tone, while the others were still talking of the picture.

"I wonder that you ask, at this late hour," she answered, a trifle stiffly.

"Nevertheless, I do ask," he returned, "and shall do exactly as you tell me."

"Mamma says you must not spoil the picture," and Philip wondered if it were the reflection from the curtain that lent the faint tinge of color to the delicate face.

"You said yourself it would be a picture without the figures, and you were right. I will do exactly as you desire," he persisted, daubing the brush onto the pallet he held.

"Leave it as it is," she said, and Philip knew it was not the curtains this time, as she moved quickly from him. He smiled, but did not thank her for the permission, as he rejoined the others at the easel. There was a look of puzzled inquiry in Ellen's face, as his

eyes met hers, which did not change for a moment under the bright smile he gave her.

“Will you be kind enough to accept this sketch when it is finished, Mrs. Dare?” Philip asked, with winning courtesy, when he found her admiration was genuine.

“Your pretty picture? It would be a shame, much as I would like it. I fear you don’t appreciate its worth,” she said, with a youthful little blush.

“I fear you over-estimate its merits because you know the artist,” he said, laughing, “and then you know the place so well—that makes a difference. I hope you are not going to disappoint me by refusing it; I intended it for you,” telling his lie with good grace.

“Anyone would like it,” she answered, “and I will be very glad to accept it. But haven’t you spent a great deal of time on it?”

“Oh, no. Since you admire that, I am emboldened to show you how much more I have done,” proceeding to uncover several sketches as he spoke. “You see, I have not been idle since I have been here.”

“Rachel, did you hear?” Mrs. Dare asked, for the girl had been looking out of the open

window during this conversation; "Mr. King has given me his beautiful picture."

"Yes, I heard, mamma; he is extremely—" and she hesitated a moment—"he is quite skillful; the picture is very fine," she finally added.

"I knew you would think that; you could not help it. And I don't believe I have even thanked you yet, Mr. King."

"You have thanked me by accepting it. You don't know what trouble artists have sometimes to give their pictures to anyone. Now come and look at the others. You see, you are spoiling me already; when you admire one I expect you to admire all. These are extremely sketchy, and require a great deal of touching up."

"Oh, but they're lovely!" Mrs. Dare exclaims, "and I'm sure you're quite too modest. Dear me, if I could do anything like that, I would think myself a Raphael, or Titien, or Michael Angelo, or some old master. But why it isn't quite as well to be an artist in the present day, I don't know. I've seen ever so many pictures I liked better than those dark old things."

"If we could wait until a century or two

had passed over some of these, perhaps we could see people paying astonishing prices for them also. I think age makes some difference," Rachel says brightly.

"There's encouragement there," Philip answered her; then, noting Ellen's silence, continued: "Mrs. Bernard says I may make a study of Ellen. I wish her hair would suggest Titien's to you after it is painted, Mrs. Dare, as it does to me now in the natural state. It's positively golden."

"It will, I know, if that is what you mean it to do, you are so clever. I don't believe you know how well you paint."

"I shall soon, if I believe all these pretty compliments. I only want my picture to look like Ellen; I will be satisfied if I succeed in that;" and while they were passing out Philip wondered again why the child looked at him with a puzzled expression.

When Rachel went back to her room she took a letter from her portfolio and read it carefully twice; then, lighting a candle, thrust the letter in the flame, and watched it burn until only the blackened bits remained, rustling gently on the hearth.

"She says there may possibly be a mistake,"

she told herself, " and he shall have the benefit of the doubt;" and when Philip met her again he felt that a little barrier had been removed.

CHAPTER VII.

" I saw Gaston over to St. Benedict to-day, an' he set he 'lowed to come ofer dees night, an' stay teel Montay," Henry Bernard announced the next Saturday at supper. " He says John's lek is a-gettin' stronger, an' they don't neet him much on Suntays now. I thought that would plees de leetle one," he added, chuckling as Ellen's color arose.

The old man's accent always caused Philip to smile, notwithstanding the respect he could not help feeling for him, he possessed a quaint, almost pathetic, dignity, which pleased and often touched the young man. Henry Bernard had formed a liking for Philip, and seized every opportunity to converse with him. His eye was ever open for choice bits of scenery, and would tramp any distance out of his road to show the young artist the way to some new spot. The faithful representation on canvas of his much-loved land pleased him, and he

reflected with simple pride that these were *his* fields, *his* hills, *his* river, which would delight the eyes of the city people by-and-by. The old man was not alone in his admiration for Philip; every one on the farm had grown to wait for the bright smile or single word of greeting he had always ready.

Their homage moved him but little; indeed, he was so accustomed to it, only its lack would have made him aware how necessary it was for his happiness.

Somehow Henry Bernard's speech annoyed Philip a little this evening, and when Ellen blushed he found himself frowning at the ready color which usually pleased him. "She blushes if you look at her," he said to himself.

Presently there was a step on the porch, and a moment later a tall young man entered. A broad-shouldered, well-proportioned fellow he was, with the same dignity of bearing his uncle wore, which the country-made garments were unable to disguise. He shook hands with them all, and was presented to Philip, who wondered silently "what in the devil they all meant by being 'proper glad to see him.'"

"I heard Miss Dare was goin' to sing to-morrow, an' I tried to get up to hear her,"

Gaston was saying, after they had talked about the welfare of the family and the extent of the wheat crop on the Martone farm. He cast a shy little glance across at Rachel as he told his reason for coming.

“Not in the morning,” she answered pleasantly. “I told Father Dutton I would sing at Benediction. I went with Ellen to see him yesterday, and found him quite as charming as ever,” and as she rose Mrs. Dare and Philip followed, leaving the others with Gaston, who had only begun his supper.

“What charity you display singing for those poor people down there,” Philip said, nodding in the direction of St. Benedict. He had seated himself by her, while her mother had gone to her room for a moment.

“Do you think it is charity?” she asked, smiling. “I am sorry to be obliged to confess I don’t sing for them, but for Father Dutton.”

“The effect is the same—they listen to it,” he rejoined. “I don’t suppose they hear good music from one year’s end to the next.”

“True, they listen to it, but they have really a good choir; so it’s not such a treat as you suppose.”

"It seems to be, as this stalwart youth has come so far to hear you," he answered.

"I think Ellen might have a little credit for that," she said, laughing. "My singing is a secondary affair."

"Ellen's sweetheart, is he? I believe I heard it before. It's hard to fancy such a child with a lover," he answered, thinking what a musical laugh her's was.

"She is not such a child as she appears. I often forget myself that she is quite nineteen. The convent she went to accounts for her superior manners," she answered, as if reassuring herself.

"Ah, yes. She's a pretty child, and a little too good for the brawny farmer. Do you mind if I smoke, Miss Dare? Suppose we walk down to the river," he suggested, after his cigarette was lighted. "The moon will rise soon, and that bench is tempting there on the bank; or," with sudden eagerness, "let us have a row. I have not yet had an opportunity to display my ability in that line."

"I would not for the world deprive you of an opportunity to distinguish yourself," she answered, with a bright smile, "especially as that is precisely what I was wishing for. I

must tell mamma I am going ; she might think I was lost."

He heard her mother call to her not to be long gone, in a voice that had a little ring of displeasure, he fancied. When she returned she had thrown around her a white burnoose, with broad golden stripes, and Philip stood for a moment looking at her in surprise, for she was beautiful. The rich material in the wrap was peculiarly suited to her, and as she stood on the doorstep smiling, waiting for him to rise, he thought her the loveliest woman he had ever seen.

"Are you not coming?" she questioned lightly, "or did you change your mind while I was gone?"

"Indeed, I am coming; I was obliged to admire the effect for a moment," with a little wave of the hand toward the gorgeous burnoose.

"Yes, it is becoming," she calmly answered, "and the chilly evenings render it quite necessary."

If any more fitting opportunity for flirtation exists than a row on a quiet summer evening scientists have not yet discovered it. The sun had gone down behind the hills, and the

earth was submerged in the pale, soft after-glow, while away in the eastern horizon the yellow moon was peeping over the water. As he rowed along, almost silently, the minds of both these young people were filled with strange fancies. The silence, the dim light, the high bank beside them, reminded Philip of a cathedral he had known in the old world; and the girl opposite seemed as a patron saint to his imaginative eyes, so still, so pale, so beautiful she sat, trailing her white fingers through the water, and it was a new reverence, a strange feeling that she was above and beyond him with which he ever after regarded her.

She was thinking how often Dick had been seated in the place Philip occupied. She tried to picture him there now, but it was only a very shadowy picture which came at her call; the substance seemed far away. But the phantom was there, and somehow its appearance was boyish, and almost weak, in contrast with Philip's actual presence; still, it wore a fond, unselfish face, and she turned from this remembrance with regret, rather than impatience, uppermost. It was foolish for *Dick* to make love to her.

Surrounded, as she was, by a fashionable world, her heart was still a fair, unsoiled page. Her own finger had not so much as touched its margin. She knew she was beautiful; she knew how well she sang; but she did not overestimate either gift. What she knew she knew clearly, justly; and her mistakes were made before light came—never after. The process of reasoning was deliberate in this pure mind, but her conclusions were never wrong. Unspoiled by the praise which had been her portion all her young life, her affections were true and steadfast, and ever of slow growth.

After awhile she spoke to Philip again, and the recollection of her long silence filled her words with gentle kindness, as she endeavored to atone for her lack of courtesy. How good he had been not to interrupt her, when he saw she did not feel like talking; and how quick he had been to see. Presently she sang when he asked her, and by the time they regained their starting point Philip had lost his heart to this beautiful songstress. The touch of her ungloved hand, as he helped her from the boat, sent a little quiver through his frame, and as he would have spoken madly, rashly, the sound of her quiet voice, asking him some

trivial question, interrupted him, and he answered calmly, not certain whether he had spoken or not. How little do we understand the influence our lightest words possess over another's life.

As they came up the path Mrs. Dare called to them in an impatient tone to hurry, that the dew was falling, and they walked quickly to the porch. He did not trust himself with them long; he was strangely excited, and wanted to be alone, that he might think it all out.

Before he went to sleep his excitement was gone, and a strange, happy feeling remained. "If she will not marry me, I'll never marry any living woman," he told himself, and, notwithstanding this astonishing statement, was soon sleeping the sleep of the just.

The next afternoon Philip was seated at his window reading, for he could not find it in his heart to shock these simple-hearted country people by painting on the Sabbath day, as he possibly would have done any other place. By-and-by the sound of wheels aroused him, and, looking down, saw Gaston driving around to the front in the family carryall. A moment later Rachel and Ellen came out, and as he

saw them about to step into the carriage Philip seized his hat and bounded down stairs after them.

“ May I not go with you ?” he asked. “ Do not doom me to my own heathenish reflections until you return.” He addressed them all, but looked at Rachel for a reply, a little startled himself by this new symptom which made him desire to go to church.

“ Of course you may go ; may he not, Ellen ?” and as her willing assent was given, he took the vacant seat next to Gaston.

He felt an unusual exuberance of spirits during this drive along the bank of the river. He chatted and laughed, and made them all laugh with him. Even Gaston, who had looked on him with questioning eyes, dropped his vague suspicions, and enjoyed Philip’s fund of good cheer. The village was reached only too soon, and as they drove down the quiet street Philip remarked on its quaint, almost foreign, aspect. Rachel explained that it was populated almost entirely by French people, which also accounted for the only church being Roman Catholic. “ Father Dutton is also French,” she added as they alighted at the little stone church, which, like most of

the houses, was covered with a profusion of American ivy.

On entering the building Philip was surprised by the beauty of the place. Extremely simple, it was fashioned in the Gothic style, and its excellent proportions made it appear much larger than it really was. The altar, the railings, and all the wood-work were white, relieved here and there by a delicate gold vine, which twisted and curved and lost itself occasionally, to renew its course farther on. Several really fine paintings hung on the walls, one a copy of the famous Immaculate Conception. On a side altar, surrounded as they entered by numerous devotees, stood a beautiful statue of the Mother of Christ. Vases of wild flowers were placed in every available spot, and the grace of their arrangement could only be attributed to an artistic hand.

“What does it mean?” Philip whispered to Rachel as he stood with a slightly bewildered air; and then added, with a comprehensive wave of the hand, as he noted her questioning look, “the beauty and everything.”

“I’ll tell you after awhile,” she answered gravely; “we must not talk now,” and she motioned for him to follow the others down

the aisle, while she ascended the stairs to the organ loft. Faint rays of the dying sun came through the colored windows, leaving patches of blue and purple light wherever they fell. Soon they were gone, and as the sweet twilight came candles were lighted, and Philip, with his quick, emotional nature, could understand why this evening service had power to charm a simple heart.

Presently the priest entered, majestic in his rich robes, and, while the choir sang, Philip leaned forward to catch a better view of his face. Tall and straight, with short white hair, and twinkling eyes, the old man's face was one of power, still gentle, and almost child-like in its simplicity. The young man drew a sigh of satisfaction as he noted the harmony between the minister and his surroundings. A thousand ideas came to Philip as the beautiful service proceeded, but each idea was stranded on the shore of one predominating idea. Soon, when the church was filled with the perfume of incense, and perfect silence abounded, softly, sweetly, a single voice arose, "O Salutaris Hostia," and Philip involuntarily fell on his knees, with a strange feeling of

reverence that the voice was ascending to the throne of the Most High.

"I am not worthy of her," he thought, as he covered his face with his hands in something like prayer.

Rachel was not entirely unmindful of him as she sang. A woman is seldom slow to learn a man's admiration, and, however indifferent she may feel toward him, finds it impossible to refrain from some endeavor to retain him. Neither was she quite indifferent, for no one could know Philip long and be able to resist wholly his peculiar charm of manner. She had readily guessed something of his esteem, but had not dreamed of the extent of his regard. He interested her, and she could not fail to be grateful for his presence, for she knew he added materially to their pleasure. She was glad she was singing well this evening, not that his word of praise would be pleasant to hear, but that he might be pleased with the music.

Finally, the hymn was ended, and soon after Philip found they were all rising and passing out. He was dimly conscious that the white-haired priest had spoken a few words of instruction, but he felt himself in a sort of dream.

When he left the church, where the clouds of incense were still rising to the arched roof, and stepped out into the fresh summer twilight, it was with almost a feeling of pain that he had come back to the every-day world.

The ride home was a quiet one. Ellen made a few faint efforts at conversation, but as no one seemed inclined to second them, she soon ceased, and the remainder of the way was passed almost in silence.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ May I stay with you?” Philip asked one hot afternoon in the following week. “ You look so delightfully cool out here, I really could not withstand the temptation,” tossing down some cushions as he spoke.

Rachel was slowly swinging in a hammock, reading now and then a page from *Clerical Life*, while Ellen was busied with some wonderful lace, which she fashioned with genuine French skill. Both wore simple white gowns, and, as Philip had said, looked delightfully cool.

“What will you do for us if we say yes?”
Rachel asked, smiling up at him.

“Offer you some of these first; after that, whate'er ye fair damsels command,” he answered, with a low bow.

“We scorn your cushions,” she returned; “they are too hot, and our first command shall be that you read to us while we work,” and she handed him the volume, and produced a bit of embroidery as she spoke.

“Ah, George Eliot? With all my heart. What shall it be?” he asked, after settling himself comfortably and opening the book she handed him.

When Ellen shyly suggested Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story, saying she had not read it, Rachel assented, and he turned to the story mentioned.

He reads well. It seemed to Rachel the quaint, pathetic love tale gains a new charm as his strong voice goes on. Ellen sobs aloud as the story is finished, and there is a suspicion of moisture in Rachel’s orbs when he closes the book and silently awaits their comment.

“How could she, oh! *how* could she have loved Anthony best,” Ellen asks earnestly, “when Maynard was so good?”

“It’s the way the world goes, little one,” a new voice answers, and looking up quickly they find Father Dutton quite near them, a sad expression on his peaceful face.

“Why, Father Dutton! Where did you come from?” they ask in surprise.

“From St. Benedict,” he replies, laughing.

“But when?”

“Some minutes ago. How can I tell? I keep not time in my head,” with a slight accent, and still enjoying his little surprise. He took Philip’s hand and held it for a moment when he was presented, saying:

“I listened to you read; you give much pleasure. But why do you read so sad a story to these young things? The sun is too bright to-day for sorrow.”

“It is our fault,” Rachel said; “we chose the story.”

“Ah, why will the young people choose the sad things and the old ones the glad ones? When you have yourself cares, you will want another’s joys to read about, and will not want to weep at another body’s sorrows,” and he smiled at Ellen, who had already recovered her cheerfulness, and was smiling in return.

“But it is so beautiful,” she said, in exten-
uation.

“Yes, beautiful to you, because this woman
tells well her story. But can you guess it was
beautiful to these in the story-book? Do you
think the poor child — what do you call her?
Caterina? or the good young man, saw that
it was beauty?”

“Perhaps there was some for him. Some
natures are happiest when giving their best,”
Philip said thoughtfully.

“That is true,” the priest answered quickly,
giving him a searching glance. “There are
many in this world happy in giving to those
who no return can make. As you grow old
you will find that those who do the most give
have the less to show for their affection.”

“That, then, is unreasoning love which
places itself upon an unworthy object,” Rachel
said.

“Ah, child, reason and love fly not together.
Where love is reason comes not often. How
happy it would be if it were not so!”

“I don’t think Caterina should have mar-
ried Maynard at last,” Ellen observed, still
intent on the story. “If she could not have

given him her first affection, it was not fair to marry him."

"No, no! Would you have them always unhappy? She found she loved best the good man; she was right," the old man answered warmly.

"Yes, she loved him best; but *I* should not have married him," Ellen repeated.

"You are too young to think of it," Father Dutton said in an almost solemn tone. "Let us pray that the good God in heaven will keep you all from such trials." Then lightly, as if the subject were dismissed, he added: "Why come you not for your sugar plums to-day? Must I tell Hortense you grow too big to care for her bon-bons?" and he drew from his capacious pocket a dainty basket of sweetmeats. "I will give them to-day to Miss Dare, because she was so good to sing for us Sunday. She must beg you for some, Miss Dare, for so it will punish her. My sister keeps the house for me now, and she likes to make these little things; our mother, who is dead, taught her. Besides, she sends to you both her love, and was happy to hear you sing again. She says it was like an angel," he added, as Rachel distributed the bon-bons.

“I am glad she was pleased,” she answered simply. I will sing again at Benediction whenever you like.”

“We would always like,” he returned, “we would keep you with us forever, and make you sing always, if we had our selfish way.”

“Oh, no! you would soon grow tired of having a heretic constantly with you,” she said, laughing.

“You would not be a heretic long,” and he laughed joyously with her; “your own music would convert you. Is not that true, Mr. King?”

“Miss Dare’s music could convert one to any doctrine she desired,” Philip replied, quietly enough, but with a glance at Rachel, which made Father Dutton smile silently and look keenly at her for an answering expression. But she had turned toward the river, and if conscious of the scrutiny of the two men, she made no sign.

“She has already converted you,” the priest thought. “Ah, these young hearts! Is it that he must suffer, or does she love him also?”

“You are right to love music,” was what

he said, giving no indication of his discovery. "But I think a beast would love hers."

"You would both spoil me," Rachel said, playfully. "How shall I punish you for such open flattery?"

"Would you make us untruthful by punishing us for telling the truth?" Philip asked, gravely.

She regarded him for a moment before answering:

"No, I would not punish you for truth," was all she said, and turned her eyes again to the river.

She was wonderfully pretty to-day. The hammock had slightly rumpled her brown hair, and two little bits of color were in the usually pale cheeks. She wore at her bosom a bunch of laurel Philip had brought her that morning; and as he looked at her standing before him, so slim and straight, with the bright light shining in her gray eyes, he could scarcely resist the temptation to take her hand, to touch her gown, or in some manner assure himself she was real flesh and blood, and that some day she might, perhaps, be his.

Ah, what a wealth of joy, or sorrow those

two words may mean for us! Most of us expect happiness some day.

Father Dutton turned from his contemplation of these two, to address a remark to Ellen, whose silence surprised him. But before he could speak the sight of her face froze the words on his lips.

“My God!” he thought, with almost a groan, “is this child also doomed to sorrow?”

Her eyes were fixed on Philip, and in their depths the old man, who had known and loved her from infancy, read that she had left childhood behind her and taken up a woman’s cares. There was no mistaking the doubt with which she regarded the young man, whose face was turned toward Rachel.

“Mother of God,” the priest inwardly prayed, “ask of thy Son that she be spared this sorrow!”

“Ellen!” he suddenly exclaimed, and even Philip observed the sharp ring of pain in his voice, “you have not told to me how big the white doves grow. You must show them, that I can tell Hortense how they like the farm.”

“So I must,” she answered, rising with him, the childish expression returning, “you can’t think how large they are. I have named

the one with the black ring, Chief; he struts so. "Will you come with us?" she asked the others. "We are going to the barn to see the doves."

"I think not, Rachel answered, "it is time to waken mamma; she has had a long sleep this afternoon."

"Yes," Father Dutton said, "I would be glad to see the mother again."

Philip also murmured an excuse, and the two went off together, leaving him alone with Rachel.

"Don't go now, please don't," he pleaded, as she began to collect her work, preparatory to entering the house.

"Why?" she asked simply.

"Because I want you to talk to me awhile. You never say a word to me any more. Then if you wait the mail will be here presently."

"What a fib!" she returned lightly, in answer to the first part of his argument. "I have said a hundred words to you this very afternoon."

"Yes, but you said them to Ellen as well as to me, and I want them all to myself. You see I am selfish."

"I see. You are right in one respect, at

least. The mail will soon be here, and I believe I shall wait," and she seated herself as she spoke on the rock where Philip had sketched her. Marguerites were springing up here and there among the grass, and as she walked to her favorite seat a line occurred to Philip which pleased him: "Her feet have touched the meadows and left the daisies rosy." Several times it repeated itself, until he finally dismissed it with a "Pshaw! I'm getting foolish."

Rachel was the first to break the silence.

"There is the basket with Father Dutton's sugar plums; I had almost forgotten it. He never comes empty handed." Then she added, with an almost childlike air, "Don't you think he is charming?"

"Very," he answered, smiling. "I don't wonder his people are fond of him."

"No one does, after they know him. Hasn't he lovely manners? He is a dear old man," she ended with more enthusiasm than he had ever seen her display.

"Do you ever say that of a young man?" he questioned, going over to her.

"Seldom," she answered, changing from the friendly manner she had worn to the cool,

indifferent one that frequently irritated Philip; “one so rarely meets a charming *young* man.”

“Do you not? I often do. The race is not so devoid of charm as you fancy,” he returned, a trifled nettled by her reply.

“I do not fancy; I have positively no imagination; I speak from conviction,” and she shaded her eyes with her hand as she looked down the road for the mail. “Ben is coming,” she announced. “How many letters do you expect.”

“None at all. It’s a bore to answer letters, so I left my address only with my solicitor; and, from the length of time your correspondence consumes, I find there was wisdom in my conduct.”

“It is a pleasure for me to write, and a much greater pleasure to receive letters. For instance, don’t you think these make me happy?” she asked, holding up half a dozen the boy handed her. “You are doomed to disappointment,” she went on, “for one of these is for you.”

In delivering it to him she dropped one from the number remaining, and when Philip picked it up he recognized the same writing he had noticed so often before. The sight of

it served to irritate him unusually to-day, and he exclaimed impulsively as he gave it to her:

“Your correspondent is very punctual; he never misses a day.”

“You are mistaken; I had no letter from him yesterday,” she quietly rejoined.

Then it was undoubtedly “him.” He found he had possessed a faint hope to the contrary, notwithstanding the masculine character of the address.

“You were doubtless very much worried,” he went on in a rather disagreeable tone, regardless alike of good manners and the little flash in the gray eyes.

“No, I was not very much worried, only a little anxious,” and she began to gather up her belongings.

“Do you treat all of your admirers with the same tender solicitude?” he continued recklessly, determined to discover something definite.

“None of them,” she answered coldly. “My father alone receives what you please to term my tender solicitude,” and bowing ceremoniously she swept past him into the house.

Philip felt a great weight had been lifted; he wanted to shout he felt so happy to know

it was only her father who had written her every day since her arrival. "Why not now?" he asked himself, but a new diffidence, which surprised him, overcame this desire, and bade him wait awhile, ere he risked his fate. By-and-by he reflected that she had evidently been annoyed by his persistent rudeness in trying to discover her correspondent. "That won't last long," he consoled himself, as he went up stairs, and dressed for supper with unusual care.

"I saw Gaston at Mass on Sunday, Ellen," Father Dutton began, as they walked to the barn together. "Why didn't he come to see me?"

"I don't know; I guess he hadn't time. He didn't come till Saturday night. There's one of the pretty white fellows now," pointing to a dove circling over their heads. "They will think I am coming to feed them."

"Bless me, I suppose I shall be publishing your bans one of these days. Why, it seems I baptized you like only yesterday. What a little tiny thing you were then. All eyes and shiny hair. You have not now gotten very big. When I talk of a wedding for you, I feel I get old."

“Don’t talk of it then, please,” she said, a flush coming into her ever-changing face, leaving it pale when it receded. “I don’t want a wedding. I don’t want to marry any one.”

“Not want to marry Gaston? Why what will he do for a wife?” the old man asked, feeling little of his assumed lightness. “Tut! tut! all the girls say that. I must tell Gaston not to wait after the fall.”

“Oh, no, Father Dutton, please don’t!” and she caught his hand imploringly. “Indeed, indeed, I don’t want to marry any one.”

“And what shall Gaston do?” he asked, still in the same tone, which gave little evidence of his heavy heart.

“Oh, I don’t know; let him marry some one else,” she answered, with a little sob.

“Come child,” he said, gently, “you know you would like it badly for Gaston to marry some other one. Now think it over, and tell me next week you will say yes to Gaston.”

“Oh, Father Dutton, I can’t,” she sobbed. “I never can.”

“Well, well, we will look at the fowls, and let go that big tiresome Gaston. Wipe your eyes, and we won’t say any more now. See!

You are stingy! They want a biscuit from your pocket," he said, playfully, as the birds pecked at Ellen's gown.

"I can say nothing to the mother," he reflected anxiously. "She will think I am only in a jest, and if I am earnest, she will spoil it all. What shall I do? May the Father guide me."

CHAPTER IX.

Not for several days did Philip think of the letter Rachel handed him that afternoon, and even then was reminded of it by accidentally searching in his coat pocket for a missing key.

"I'll be shot if it isn't from Steve," he said, as he opened it. It ran simply:

"DEAR OLD FELLOW:

"Have gotten back from that infernal hole, and though I've several good things to show for it, it's not worth the pains. What are you doing in the country? Shall I come up there to see you, or will you run down to the city for a day or two. Am at the Brunswick, as usual, and will be here a couple of weeks.

"Let me know what you will do. I've had a deuce of a time getting your address.

"Hastily. STEVE."

“It’s like Steve, to hunt me up,” he thought, as he rammed the epistle back into his pocket. “What in the devil does he think I’ve got to do, to have time to run all over the country to see him for a couple of days. I expect he did have a dull time of it up there, but it’s his own fault. I told him if he’d wait I’d go with him. He can just make the best of it at the Brunswick this hot weather,” and he painted away viciously, making the cliff on the canvas topple in a way nature never intended.

Art was work, and not play for Steve Hendley, and although less industrious than Philip, he made a fair living thereby. The two were inseparable when in town, but that did not prevent either of them from forming a sudden resolution to take a long sketching tour alone. Frequently they would not hear from each other for a month or two, but in that case they were all the happier when they came together again. This time Philip had left while Stephen was gone, and the latter felt like a fish out of water when he returned to his familiar haunts and found his friend gone.

After awhile Philip relented a little.

“I’d like to see the old chap, too,” he mused,

“but I wouldn’t care to have him up here. I believe I’ll run down to see him toward the end of the week. Terrible nuisance, though—a whole day’s ride.”

He had seen little of Rachel since Father Dutton’s visit, and when he did see her she was neither distinctly friendly nor decidedly the opposite, still Philip endeavored to convince himself she did not regard him with indifference. Their hour at the piano had been interrupted; she complained of a cold, and the clear voice did seem a trifle husky. She was in her room a great deal, but Philip discovered she had resumed her exercise in the early morning. He had not troubled her since he learned she preferred to go without him. Twice he brought her laurel since he found she was fond of it, but the second time she asked him not to go again. She gave no reason for her request, and he knew she thought he was in danger in climbing to the top of the cliff. Still he assented at once, and she simply thanked him.

That evening she went with him again on the river, and, after a little silence, Philip boldly said :

“Have you really a cold? or do you only

say so because you don't like to have me interrupt your music?"

She looked at him in genuine surprise. "Of course I have a cold," she answered frankly; "you don't interrupt me. Why should you think so?"

"Because I feared I had offended you the other day by my persistence in regard to your correspondent."

"I had quite forgotten it," she said with a pleasant little laugh; "why do you remind me of it?"

"That I might beg to be forgiven. I fancied you had been treating me coldly for a day or two, and that that was the cause," and he dropped his oars and leaned eagerly forward. A bright wave of color swept into the girl's face, but she still looked directly at him as she responded:

"That was not the cause. Pay no attention to my silly moods; I assure you there is no accounting for them."

"Shall I not? May I believe you do not intend I should think you indifferent?"

"Why not?" and as she laughed again the color receded from her face, leaving her paler than before, he fancied.

"Ah," with a sigh of satisfaction, "then I shall. It is too much bliss to be in heaven awhile to be willing to come back to earth again."

"I have a higher idea of heaven," she smiled; "for instance, look at those lilies down there. Oh, I must have some!"

"You shall have them all," he said, and directed the boat toward them. In a little while they had dozens of the pure white blossoms lying at their feet. Rachel seemed singularly young and bright this evening. She twined the lilies lightly in her brown hair, and pinned them on her white gown. She even fastened one in the band of Philip's hat, which he had removed in the warm evening air.

"You look like a water sprite," he said as she finished and turned to him with folded hands for approval. "You should always wear these, they suit you," he added, with grave approval, thinking as he spoke how like she was to the pale flower. "Like that one," he thought, looking at one whose fair, white petals were but partly spread, and the rich, golden heart lay hidden. "It will open to-morrow when the sun is warm," he reflected, pleased

with his fancy, as he watched the pure face before him. A gentle, almost childlike, expression was resting there now, as she spoke softly :

“They suit none of us. Which of us are good enough to wear these pure, white things?” and she began slowly to remove them.

“No, let them stay ; they are beautiful so,” and he put out a detaining hand.

“I shall leave this one bunch for my guardian angel, as Ellen would say,” and she removed all but two or three at her bosom.

“That is one of the pretty Catholic fancies,” he smiled. “It must be a great source of discomfort some times, when one has done the wrong thing, to think there is a messenger always so near to tell the tale. An earthly angel would satisfy me.”

“Now, you are laughing!” she exclaimed, “and I do not like to have my theories ridiculed.”

“Do you seriously believe you have a guardian angel?” he asked softly.

“Yes; and no argument could shake my belief. It comes from intuition, not reasoning. I believe that a spirit is sent from heaven, ever ready to guide, to guard, to pro-

tect me, and at this moment it is with me, and that one is always waiting at your side as well as mine to give you help when you need it."

She looked so earnestly at him, he involuntarily turned his head to see the spirit of which she spoke with such conviction.

"Oh, you cannot see it," she said, regaining her usual manner, "I fear I am talking nonsense."

"No, you are not; one cannot laugh at such a beautiful idea. Do you really believe," he went on, unwilling to leave the subject, "that in a serious undertaking, one which would affect your life's happiness, this ever watchful spirit would direct your action?"

"I do," and her sweet solemnity made him ashamed of his slightly incredulous tone. "I believe if I should turn in any direction from the way to true happiness, it would be because I had disregarded the guide-posts erected for my safety; and that sometimes my guardian angel would lead me back into the path I had left. Do not understand that I expect him to give me direct information, but that the incidents, trivial and unimportant as they appear, which daily occur in our lives, are only stepping-stones to some end—that each has a

meaning and bearing, direct or indirect upon our future. Few of us understand or care to read their significance."

There was a pause after this long speech, and then Philip asked, "Are you superstitious?"

"I think not," she returned, "but I don't wonder that you think that sounds like it. If I had more religion, I probably would have fewer fancies of this sort."

"I cannot picture you following the set rules of any sect," he said musingly, "you seem too ready to think for yourself."

"Can you not?" and she leaned quickly forward. "Ah, that is my trial; the fact that I *must* think for myself. Responsibility in its very name possesses actual terror for me. I would be happy, I think, could I subjugate my mind to one superior, and do only what I am commanded, as nuns do, for instance."

"You do not know what you are saying," he said, with a gesture of vexation. "This Catholic atmosphere is not good for you."

"Yes, I love it. There is no danger that I shall ever be a nun; the confinement, the dull routine would kill me. I did not mean I should care for a nun's life, only for their free-

dom from responsibility. No, the poetry of the Catholic religion pleases me, as the external beauty delights you. That is all," and she began to pick up the lilies as they neared home.

"Yes, it pleases me," he slowly answered, "but—I think it more than pleases you."

"You are right; it interests me. Now let me apologize for having bored you. Is it a new grief or a species of consolation to know that I have never spoken in this way to any one. It honestly surprises me as much as it does you," and she dropped the earnest tone she had employed, and took up a light conversational air which rather jarred upon Philip.

"You compliment me by speaking your mind," he answered, "and the fact that you speak it first to me is more than compliment. Why did you do it?" and he retains her hand a moment after assisting her from the boat.

"Who can tell?" with a slight wave of the slender hand he had just released. You were so sympathetic, perhaps. Don't you know," and she assumed a light, almost jaunty air, "you must never ask a woman why. Ten to one she won't have a reason, and if she has,

twenty to one she will make you angry by telling it."

"That is something she cannot do," he rejoined, adopting the same spirit. "It will take more than a woman's reason to make me lose my temper."

"Ah, you boast; beware that you do not lose it for punishment," and she shook a warning finger before him, thinking how handsome he looked, standing there in the moonlight, little damp rings of hair clustering about his white forehead. She thought of his beauty exactly as she would have thought of a picture or statue, except she would have spoken her admiration had he been aught but flesh and blood.

"There's a mist around the moon," she said, glancing up, as Philip stood silently staring at her, "we shall have rain to-morrow. Come, or mamma will tell us the dew is falling. I fear we are late this evening," and as they hurried on she little guessed that for the second time her chance remark had prevented a declaration.

"Dear me, Rachel! I thought some terrible thing had happened to you. Don't you know it isn't safe to be on the river so late; all sorts

of vapors arise, and you will have some terrible fever yet," Mrs. Dare exclaimed when they entered, and there was genuine annoyance in her tone.

A little doubt crossed Philip's mind that there was some reason for her objection other than she gave, for although the moon was rising, it was not yet late.

"There hain't no ague on this river, is there, father?" said Martha Bernard. "We've been a livin' here ever since Mother Bernard died, and that was nineteen years ago this spring. We moved in sheep-shearin' time, and there hain't no one had the ague, as I know of yet."

"No," the old man answered, deliberately, "der 'haint no akue, but dere's oder tings to be caught on de river."

"Now, there, Rachel! didn't I tell you! Mr. Bernard says there *are* dreadful things to be caught. Really, my dear, what would your father say to such imprudence?"

"Mr. Bernard didn't say what the dreadful things were," Philip said, noting the twinkle in the old man's eye.

"You'll know if you get him; maybe it 'ees fish," and Henry Bernard chuckled im-

moderately at his little joke, as his wife openly nudged him.

“Of course they will know,” Mrs. Dare went on, failing to see the point.

“You must blame me, Mrs. Dare, for keeping her so late; I was lazy coming back, and did not row as fast as I might. We shall go before supper after this, and be safely housed before sunset,” Philip said at last, too much amused by the shower of remarks with which they were greeted, to think of making an excuse before.

Rachel laughed, “You would be depriving mamma of one of her chief joys if you did that, Mr. King. She is happiest when she is worrying about some one. Isn’t it so, mamma?” and stooping, she lightly touched her lips to her mother’s forehead.

“You know you are not strong,” her mother returned, smiling up at her, “and I am afraid you will be ill.”

“Not strong! Why mamma, I’m a perfect Hercules; I’m never ill, am I, Ellen?” as the child passed her on her way into the hall. If she heard the question, she made no response, but Philip fancied there was a faint sound as she went by him in the doorway.

Rachel puzzled him, he confessed to himself that night. He never knew which mood to expect. He would leave her, apparently the best of friends, and, returning, would find her distinctly indifferent or perfectly silent. The silent mood was hardest to interpret, for her face was positively unreadable at such times. Occasionally he fancied she wore a sad expression, when she would surprise him by becoming suddenly gay, as if she understood his desire to read her. When the others were engaged in conversation, she was frequently abstracted, but singularly earnest and attentive when they spoke directly to her.

He felt a decided elation when he reflected on her confidential manner in the boat. "Or no," he corrected himself, "it was not confidential, only earnest. Whatever it was, I love her," he thought, "and that innocent face cannot belong to a coquette," as he sometimes in his uncertain moods considered her.

"I think I'll run down to-morrow and see Steve," was his last resolution before going to sleep. "His judgment is usually good, and I'll put the whole case before him."

The next morning it was raining, as Rachel had predicted, one of those steady down-pours

that come to stay, so it was out of the question to go to the city to-day. Philip was conscious of a slight sensation of relief as he looked out on the gloomy landscape, and reflected that he would have another day for new developments before making his statement to Steve. If the truth be told, he was a little afraid of his cousin's keen eyes, much as he desired his opinion.

“There is no sense in a man being in love,” Steve often said, “when there are so many girls to take the trouble off of you.”

To do Philip justice, he had really never been so deeply in love before. He recognized the difference between this and a dozen little affairs which he had poured before into Steve's avowed unsympathetic ear, but feared he could not make him understand the distinction. “I believe, after all, I'll bring him back with me,” he mused, “and let him judge for himself.”

CHAPTER X.

St. Benedict was a village dear to Father Dutton's kindly heart. He was a very young man when he came here first, and the place seemed to his homesick eyes like a glimpse of France in the heart of America. With these simple French people he could forget that he was in a strange land, and he soon grew attached to them, and stayed with them for their own sakes, little troubled by worldly ambition. Years had passed since his coming, some passing smoothly, some with a crash and clatter, and all swiftly; and in that time many advancements had been proffered him. But he refused them all with simple dignity, content to save these souls he had learned to love, and who had grown from childhood to manhood, from manhood to old age, under his tender care. His own private fortune had built and furnished his church, and his prosperous people knew how far, besides, it had gone toward aiding them in their earthly trials.

The affection with which his people regarded him was only a degree removed from adoration. The thought of his grief often restrained them from wrong, when no higher

motive troubled their artless brains. They seldom attempted deception, for his perception was keen and his judgment quick to see through the frail webs their unskilled tongues sometimes wove. Some there were among them who believed he had a special gift straight from heaven to read their innermost thoughts, and the old crones mumbled long tales of miracles performed, while these men and women were still in the cradle. He frowned severely on these, when, perchance, a word or two would reach his ear, but his modesty only served to assure them of his saintliness.

The old man lived simply as the men and women about him. His only amusement he found in his library, filled with rare and valuable volumes, and his garden, which old Baptiste loved as the apple of his eye, and watched and tended as Father Dutton did his flock.

Sometimes Baptiste and Mathilda whispered together in their native tongue of a grave in sunny France, where "the Father's" last good-byes had been told. Ah, well, that was before he had been a priest, and if he had known a grief no one but these two was ever the wiser, for they kept their counsel. His

kindly cheer was far removed from a thought of sadness, save when he grieved in his people's sorrows, and his laugh was ever ready in their joys.

Mademoiselle Hortense was disturbed the morning following Father Dutton's visit at the farm. He was evidently troubled. His usual fund of bright gossip was missing; and to her secret sorrow the newly-laid egg, always consumed with enjoyment, remained untouched. Therefore, she was not unprepared for a very unusual circumstance—the calling of Baptiste and the ordering of what he pleased to term his carriage. To a few untutored minds this might appear a very simple incident, and only the initiated understood all it involved.

Baptiste was a very formidable personage. He had played with Father Dutton when they were children in their native land; as young men they had crossed the ocean together, and old age had finally scattered its ashes over the heads of priest and servant alike. Baptiste's veneration for his master did not prevent him from holding a rod of iron over his head where household details were concerned; and only on rare occasions did the

master rebel and exert his authority. Baptiste trembled when these times came, for he knew they meant exact obedience. Only Mathilda, who had also grown gray in the good man's service, knew the actual fear Baptiste felt on such occasions.

This morning he shuffled hastily in answer to the bell, prepared for the argument he felt was only his just due when an order was given.

“Bring me the carriage, Baptiste, and be ready in half of an hour—quick!” Father Dutton said peremptorily, after returning the good morning offered.

“You cannot haf de carritch dees day, de horse has on one leg no shoe,” the old man returned, surprised by the tone of the command, still unwilling to be deprived of an accustomed pleasure.

“You will bring the carriage in half of an hour,” the priest repeated, apparently in no mood to gratify his servant's love of controversy.

“But de band is off what you call him? the tire is off de wheel, and de weets must come out of de garten dees morning. You gafe me yesterday dat word.” Father Dutton's very figure

should have been warning enough, so determined he stood, but it was not.

“ You may take the horse and the carriage to the blacksmith’s, but you must be ready in half of an hour,” he said for the third time, knowing Baptiste’s irremediable damages were soon repaired. “ I shall not be home to dinner,” he added in French to Mademoiselle, and, turning, walked out of the room, leaving the servant standing in open-mouthed astonishment.

“ You must do as Father Dutton tells you, and not argue,” Mademoiselle said sternly in French, and the old man walked off, rubbing his head in perplexity.

Father Dutton made it a principle to speak English in his household, that they might perfect themselves in that language. Only to his sister, who disliked what she called “ de cold hard English,” did he speak in his mother tongue. But twice this morning had he forgotten and addressed her in the language she detested. “ It must be something very unusual, indeed,” she said, as she busied herself with her tedious foreign darning.

Within the allotted time Baptiste was waiting, and Father Dutton took the reins, while

his servant murmured something about “De blacksmeet; he was queek, dees day,” and inwardly congratulated himself that he had not been asked to accompany him in his ride.

“I haf not seen de Father look so seence John ran away,” he confided to Mathilda. “He looks like he was in a big puzzle. What could happen?”

“It is not goot to think of de Father’s ways,” that worthy answered severely, as she spread sand on the white floor. “He knows de best—better dan your stupid head. Now go away; how can I clean my floor, when de men stand in de road?”

“He deed not tell where he would go,” Baptiste grumbled to himself, as he limped off to escape the shower of sand which fell at his feet and threatened to occupy all spare space in his low shoes.

Father Dutton laughed a little to himself as he jogged along the dusty road, leaving Baptiste standing with eyes and mouth both wide open.

“It is well to give him a fright sometimes,” he thought. “I will get him some tulips at the farm for his garden, and that will please him again.”

In a little while the old servant had faded from his memory, and in his place stood Ellen, wearing on her face the look she had worn yesterday, when her eyes rested on the young artist.

“ Maybe I am wrong, and foolish to think so,” he ruminated as he gently touched the old roan with the whip, which touch made not the slightest difference in the animal’s gait. “ But it will be for me a satisfaction, and the child is old enough now to be married. Dear me! how old I get! I fear I soon will have no more usefulness,” and pulling out his beads, he occupied himself as the fat old horse trotted slowly along in the hot sun. On either side of the way clumps of elderberry bushes and wild roses were blooming in profusion, and here and there he came to a wayside spring, where the thrifty farmers had placed rude wooden troughs for the benefit of the thirsty traveler and his beast. Occasionally he would stop and speak to some one working in the fields near, but he met few persons on the road.

At last he drew up before a farm-house with the air of one who had ended his journey.

“It makes me glad to know John will soon be well,” he was saying half an hour after he had entered the house, during which time he had heard with ready sympathy all the household news. “He will be glad to work again; is it not so? Ah, you can see them cut the wheat from the window,” he added to a tall young man lying on a bed by the window, and gazing out occasionally with a discontented face at the men harvesting in the distant field. “That is hard, but God sends our trials. Who knows why he sent this one?” By and by he asked to go to the field where the men were working.

“Oh, yes, Father, if you like to go I will send Jeannie to show the shortest way,” and presently a shy little black-eyed creature appeared, well pleased with her errand, knowing that sugar plums grew in Father Dutton’s pockets.

“We will soon have dinner,” Mrs. Martone announced as they left the house.

“Then I will come back with the men; I cannot disdain the good dinner I find always here,” he answered her, smiling, and followed the child down the path through the orchard, leaving unwonted commotion in the house, as

the delighted housewife brought forth her finest linen, her choicest fruit, and crispest pickles, in honor of his coming.

Jeannie received the coveted sweets, and hurried back with a child's delight in the unusual bustle, while the priest, with a kind inquiry to each sturdy mower as he passed, walked directly to a corner of the field where Gaston Bernard, with a strong, even sweep, was leveling the yellow grain.

“ ‘Pears as if he’d got somethin’ to say,’ ” said one of the men, as they all gazed after the visitor with curious eyes.

“ I reckon he has,” some one answered; “ Father Dutton hain’t the kind to hunt a man out a-purpose unless he’s got somethin’ on his mind he wants to get rid of. They say Gaston is a-goin’ to marry Ellen Bernard soon. Like as not it’s about that.”

Gaston uttered an exclamation of surprise when he recognized the old man coming toward him, and asked hurriedly, after a short greeting, if any one were sick.

“ Not any one,” was the answer. “ I came down here after a little visit to John; I wanted to see that you were all industrious,” and he

laughed as Gaston's face relaxed into an expression of relief.

"The wheat is heavy," he went on. "It is sooner to ripen here than at the uncle's farm. He told me yesterday it would be a week before they could cut."

"Did you see them yesterday?" Gaston eagerly asked. "Were they well?"

"Yes, they were well. I think it must be that they miss you. Ellen told me the red cow liked not for any one to milk her but you."

"Did she say that?" the young man asked, a slow flush mounting to his brown face. "I miss them, too."

"When shall it be, my son? Have you not settled the day with the little one? It is time you had a wife," and he looked keenly into the black eyes as he spoke.

There was a pause, and then Gaston looked up and answered with a perplexed air: "I don't know what to say. I'm afraid to ask Ellen. Somehow or other she seems sort o' far off. She's better 'an me. I know I ain't half good enough," and he dropped his scythe and stood crushing the grain from the stalks with the heel of his stout boot.

“But this is foolish,” the priest said, with gentle impatience. “Why is it she should tell you no? Has she not always known you?”

“Yes—but—Father, I don’t know *what* makes me think she ain’t a-wantin’ to marry me.”

“You cannot think she would marry any other one?” Father Dutton asked so sharply that Gaston glanced up quickly with a startled air.

“Oh, no, I don’t think so; I don’t know of anybody.”

“Well, then, get this foolish notion out of your head. Go and ask the child—the sooner the better. She is angry perhaps that you ask not before. Wait not a day! Let me publish your bans on our Blessed Lady’s Feast, next month.”

His earnest persistence aroused Gaston to the necessity for action, and, as they obeyed the summons from the big bell, and walked together toward the house it was arranged that Gaston should go to the farm that very night.

“Whateffer it was that puzzled him dees day it ees gone,” Baptiste said to Mathilda

that evening. "I knew he was gone to Martone's, for he brought back de tuleeps."

"Shame at you to pry eento hee's ways! If he wanted such as you to know he would tell you," was the only sympathy he received, as she carried in the tea.

Gaston, however, did not go to his uncle's farm when he had intended. A storm was threatening, and for several days he worked early and late to keep the wheat dry.

"Two or three days won't make a difference any how," he reflected, philosophically.

CHAPTER XI.

What a dismal morning that was! Philip thought he had never seen it pour like that, and as he walked from his bed-room to the studio, he remembered that Rachel must stay indoors all day. How delightful it would be if he could persuade her to bring her work and sit with him as he painted. He would ask her at breakfast, and in the meantime he must put things to rights a little.

Drawing back the hangings, he surprised Ellen, again in her dusting apparel, flour-

ishing her brush daintily over his china and bric-a-brac.

“Why Ellen, is it you? I thought Mary Ann did this,” and he offered his hand for good morning.

“She did at first,” she answered, quietly, “but I was afraid she would break something, so I have done it for several days. You can’t think how awkward she is,” and dusting an easel in the corner, she did not see the outstretched hand.

“How good you are, to be anxious about my things,” he said, in precisely the caressing tone he would have used to a pretty child or graceful kitten. “But they are not worth much, and I would rather have them broken than have your fingers spoiled.”

“They are used to it,” she answered, almost pettishly, as she turned to leave the room.

Her manner was strangely different from her bright, though often shy demeanor, and Philip gazed at her in surprise. “Could it be she is piqued, that I have not spoken of the sketch since?” he asked himself, reminded of his desire by the sight of the cap he had praised.

“Stay a moment, Ellen,” he said aloud.

“When are you coming to pose for me? Have you forgotten your promise?”

“No,” she said, with more of her old manner, “I will come any time.”

“That is good,” he said, gayly. “Why do you know a moment ago, I almost fancied you were angry with me. Come, shake hands with me, and tell me you are not,” and as she shyly did as he desired, “When will you come? this morning? Ah, that is better still. Remember, now, you must not soil these dainty fingers caring for such trash,” and he lightly touched the tips of the fingers he still held with his other hand. “You will come after breakfast,” he added, as she colored, and turned once more to leave. “This is just the sort of day I should like to paint something warm and bright.”

“Perhaps she will come now,” he added to himself, thinking of Rachel, not Ellen, as he went to breakfast.

Ah, what a day that was! It seemed to Philip that whatever sorrow he might have in this world, the recollection of that day would live in his heart and cheer him forever. Rachel came with her work, just as he had wished she would. She talked to him in her friendly,

womanly manner, never once assuming the old indifferent tone he dreaded. Only then did he guess the rich intellect the girl possessed. The pure soul had ever shone through the clear gray eyes, but to-day it was present in her lightest word.

Her presence, the very sound of her beautiful voice aided him, and as he sketched Ellen, who posed intelligently and patiently, he knew he had never before worked so well.

His soul was filled with a happy peace; he could think of nothing he desired, save that this might last forever. After a while Mrs. Dare came, and he felt no impatience while the loquacious little woman chattered, for her beautiful daughter sat near him, as she had done before the mother came, and by merely lifting his eyes they could rest on her pale face. Why should he care who talked? Her beauty was his, at any rate he thought, and no one could prevent his eyes from feasting on it while she was with him. Presently Mrs. Bernard entered, and even her ungraceful figure and loud voice did not ruffle his spirit.

Soon he told Ellen to rest, and asked the others to look at the result of his work.

Against the rich background of the Persian

hangings a pathetic little figure stood, one hand resting on the window-sill, the other shading her brown eyes as she looked through the open window. An expression of patience and sorrow unspeakable rested in those dark depths, and as the critics gazed they turned quickly to the girl, whose face wore its customary appearance.

“Oh, it’s too sad!” Mrs. Dare exclaimed. “It makes my heart ache to look at it.”

“I know it,” Philip answered with a puzzled air, “but I couldn’t help it; I painted out the eyes twice, and that look would return,” and he dropped a curtain over the picture with a little shiver. “To-morrow we will try again; I’ll do something else to-day, perhaps the clouds have something to do with it.”

That evening the sun set clear and bright in the western horizon, promising a fair day to-morrow, and Philip decided to go to the city in the morning. But at breakfast Mrs. Dare proposed a drive for the afternoon, and he reflected it would be best to finish Ellen’s picture at once, and take his journey the following day. So he enthusiastically encouraged the proposition, and worked hard all morning, while Rachel, whose cold had dis-

appeared, sang in the parlor below. He did not trust himself to go to her, he felt that it would be dangerous in his present mood, and he was anxious to speak to Steve before he declared himself. His conversation with Ellen was desultory and rambling. She seemed in a happy frame of mind, occasionally humming a little tune, and chattering brightly now and then.

“There, you may rest,” he said at last in a pleased tone. “It’s the best thing I ever did. But you never had such an expression as this,” and he threw down his brush impatiently. “Come here little one, and let me see where I got it. Ah, not in these bright eyes,” and he took the dimpled chin in his hand, and gently turned her face to the light. “These eyes are dancing.”

She smiled as her eyes meet his, a simple, unconscious smile, and he felt a sudden desire to kiss the dainty, crimson lips so near his fingers, but, after a moment’s hesitation, he dropped his hand and turned again to the picture. “I don’t understand it,” he muttered, and pushed back the easel.

Alas, he had not turned quickly enough. Ellen’s bright eyes had seen him hesitate,

had almost guessed why; and a second later she was flying down the hall with burning cheeks.

The next day Philip really left for the city. They had not guessed how much he had added to their enjoyment by his ready sympathy and genial conversation, until they found how they missed him that evening. Gaston came after awhile, which formed some diversions, but Mrs. Dare and Rachel soon said good night and went up stairs.

While Rachel was disrobing, her mother came into the room, and seating herself comfortably, began:

“I had a letter from Aunt Anna to-day.”

“Ah, did you? Is she well?” the girl answered, with little surprise, for a letter from Aunt Anna was no unusual circumstance.

“Yes, she is well, and having a perfectly lovely time. The Lawsons and Dents are there now, and she says they have the loveliest clothes, Emma, especially. Elise Pearson is with her.”

“Why can’t that girl call herself Eliza?” and Rachel stifled a yawn, feeling little interest in Miss Lawson’s raiment or visitors. “Did you say she was with Emma?”

“No, with Aunt Anna. She says perhaps they will run up here for a few days before we leave.”

“Aunt Anna always says that, and she has never been here yet.”

“She seems to mean it this time. She was quite surprised to hear that Mr. King is here.”

“Does she know Mr. King?” and the brush moved a trifle faster over the long brown hair.

“Yes, she always knows people, you know. She says he paid Elise some slight attention last year, and she was perfectly crazy about him. Doesn’t it strike you, Rachel, he is a little particular in his attention?”

“To whom, mamma?”

“Why, yourself, of course! Why do you ask such provoking questions? He has been positively devoted these four weeks.”

“It would necessarily be particular if it were attention at all. I am the only available girl,” and Rachel laughed.

“Nonsense! You know well enough that you’ve been the only girl other places without receiving such marked devotion.”

“Perhaps the men were octogenarians,” Rachel answered, still smiling. “Its only Mr. King’s manner, mamma, I am certain.

Don't you notice he is quite as nice to you as he is to me?"

"No I don't notice anything of the kind. Not that he is not always agreeable, for I am sure no one could have been more companionable than he is. Aunt Anna says he is the greatest favorite, and was considered the best catch at Newport last year."

"Indeed? He gains new interest as the letter proceeds. What more did she say?" as her mother rose to leave the room, her mission apparently accomplished.

"Not much, except he is a cousin of Mr. Hendley. Oh, I forget," and she had her hand on the knob of the door by this time, and spoke rapidly, as if in a hurry. "She says Dick is going abroad in a few days. He will be gone three years. Good night," and she closed the door with a slight bang, which, however, did not prevent her from hearing the hand-mirror shiver, as it crashed against the dressing case.

"However she decides, I'll know I've treated him fairly," Mrs. Dare said before she went to sleep. "She certainly is interested in him, but I think its Dick who has her heart," and with the hope that it was Dick, she dismissed

the affair for the night, wisely deciding it would be useless to urge matters.

It was long before Rachel slept. She thought of her mother's disclosure, and her heart was a trifle hardened that Dick should leave without bidding them good-bye. Then her mind reverted to Philip, and once more Dick's image faded before his substantial proximity.

Still, it was with an uncomfortable feeling, as if something she had been accustomed to enjoy were cut off from her reach, that she finally closed her eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

In thinking it over, Gaston had come to the conclusion there would be little difficulty after all in arranging matters as Father Dutton had suggested. It is so easy to convince ourselves of what we like to believe. Why should it be otherwise? he argued. She had known him all her life, and there had always been a tacit understanding in the family that they would be married some day. Perhaps Father

Dutton was right; she felt diffident, and probably angry, that he had not asked her before. Ah, well, he would soon make it up with her, he would explain everything this evening, and he whistled as he rode along, his thoughts centered on the pretty maid at the end of the journey.

Ellen was silent this evening, he thought; but, while his uncle was asking about the crop on the Martone farm, and making arrangements for their own harvest, what could she say? Presently the old man, with a prodigious yawn, "guessed he would get to his bet," and soon after Martha Bernard went in to wind the clock, and, not returning, these two were left alone on the porch. There was nothing unusual in this, for the lad lived here all his life; still both were conscious of a certain restraint, and Ellen wished that it was a little later that she might have an excuse to say good night. "The moon is late to-night," she said, after a long pause. "Why wouldn't Gaston say something?"

"Yes," he answered deliberately, looking about him as if he had not missed it before. Then rising, he came over and stood looking at her a minute, the light from the parlor lamp

straggling faintly through the window onto the bright hair and white gown.

“Don’t you think we’ve waited about long enough, Ellen?” he asked at last, laying his brown hand gently on her shining head. Then, as there was no response, he went on: “You know what I mean. You know I’ve wanted to marry you all my life. You know I ain’t ever looked at any other girl but you since you was big enough to walk. You know I’d cut off this here right hand if you wanted me to, an’ it would do you any good. Why don’t you say somethin’, Ellen, when I love you so?”

Her voice sounded hard, even to herself, when she answered, “What shall I say?” and covered her face as she found how earnestly his eyes were fixed on her’s.

“Say you’ll marry me soon, dear—the sooner the better. I was a fool to wait so long, but I thought you wanted me to—indeed I did. Now, only say yes, only nod your head, an’ I’ll know what you mean, an’ won’t ask no more,” and he tenderly removed her hands, kneeling to look into her face.

“Oh, Gaston, I can’t,” she sobbed; “I can’t! Don’t make me, please, don’t.”

“Why, Ellen, no one can make you; I was

only a askin' you," he said, with a sense of actual physical pain in his fear. "It will make me so happy to know it's all settled at last. You shan't be sorry if you say yes. Why shouldn't we be married now, instid o' waitin? I'd feel like I had somethin' to work for then."

"Oh, Gaston, Gaston, don't ask me! I can't ever marry you—I really can't," and she turned her face from him as she spoke.

The young man slowly rose, stood perfectly silent for several minutes, then asked in a hoarse voice:

"Do you mean it, Ellen?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Never, not even if I'd wait? Why, I'd wait as long as I live, if you'd only marry me when I was a dyin'. Only say you will some day, dear, so as I won't have to give up everything at once't."

"I can't, I can't! Oh, I wish I could."

"Don't you like me well enough, darling? Is that it? If you only loved me just a little I wouldn't ask no more," and he knelt again as he pleaded with her.

"Why won't you believe me? I can't marry you, please let me go." She had risen by this, and was standing near the door, where

the light streamed directly on her face. His hand detained her a moment, and he made several efforts to speak. Finally, as she turned to leave him, he asked :

“There ain’t no one else is there, dear?”

In an instant a bright crimson had stained her face, her neck, the very tips of the fingers he still held. Quietly and slowly he dropped the hand and turned away. The blush had answered him. It told him he came too late.

His silence frightened her, and touching his sleeve she said softly, “I do love you, Gaston, but not that way. I am sorry. I don’t care for any one else.”

“I don’t blame you, dear, I’m only sorry. If ever I can do anything that’ll make you happy, just let me know. I’ve got to go back now, so good-bye.”

“To-night? Oh, no, it’s so far, and so dark.”

“It ain’t far, an’ the moon’ll come up pretty soon. Good-bye, God bless you,” and, kissing her solemnly, in a moment he was gone. She heard his horse’s hoofs as they went galloping down the lane, impatient with standing so long. Rachel was not the only one in the house who was wakeful that night. Still

Ellen had not fully realized yet what it was that prevented her from doing as he asked.

"It looks like they hat hat a quarrel," Henry Bernard remarked to his spouse the next day. "Gaston went off last night, an' Ellen is like a ghost to-day."

"Pshaw! That ain't nothin'," Martha Bernard responded, "young people is always a fussin. They'll make it up again when they get ready. It don't do to stick a finger in that kind of a pie. Now there's Miss Rachel and Mr. King. They're sure to make a match if they're only let alone. But I wouldn't give *that* for it, if any one goes a meddlin'. I do like to see young folks take their own way about things."

Henry Bernard felt that his wife's judgment could not be treated with too much respect, but he gravely shook his head as she hurried into the kitchen to "see if Mary Ann hadn't let somethin' burn while she was a talkin'. It was mighty funny if her nose was a playin' her false at her time time of life."

CHAPTER XIII.

Philip's thoughts were filled with Rachel that day, as he sped toward the city. He tried hard to think of what Steve would say when he saw him; he purchased a newspaper and made a vain attempt to interest himself. He called to mind his various acquaintances, only to find himself back at the farm-house and wondering what she was doing now. Finally he abandoned the idea of altering the direction of his mind, and leaning comfortably back, meditated on her various charms.

Presently a scrap of conversation from the seat back of him arrested his attention, and listening, he heard a girl's voice exclaim:

“If you mean Dick Armstrong, its no use; he sails for Europe next week.”

“Well, I'll have a week, anyhow,” and the second voice belonged to a very young girl, Philip decided, as they both laughed.

“Besides, he is devoted to Rachel Dare, so it won't do you any good,” the first voice persisted.

“Who is she? and who said so,” the other returned, incredulously.

“Don't you remember that tall girl at Long

Branch last summer? They say every man there proposed to her."

"Oh, yes, I remember. I don't see why she couldn't taken some of the others and leave Mr. Armstrong for me; he's so handsome."

"I think his fortune is the best of it," and they both laughed again. "Unless he's very stingy you might have fresh gloves every day, as I heard you wishing for this morning. I have heard she refused him, but I don't believe it. That reminds me, Carrie's engagement is announced. Had you heard it? She will be married in November. Do let me tell you about her clothes," and the conversation changed to Carrie's trousseau, leaving Philip sufficient food for thought in what he had heard.

He felt a singular depression at first, and for a little while could only believe it was true. Soon his reason came to bear on the question, and he was able to persuade himself his information was a mistake. "She probably had refused him," he thought, "that girl said she had refused every man at Long Branch." Again the old disturbing thought came, "Is she a coquette? Is she only amus-

ing herself out there in the country, in the absence of any other man?" But the recollection of her pure face rose before him, rebuking him for the very thought. After a while, "Why should she accept me after refusing every one else?" But that idea troubled him little.

"I'll do as Steve says," he concluded, as the train moved slowly into the depot.

"By Jove, old fellow, I'm glad to see you," Steve declared, after they had shaken hands a dozen times; "I knew you'd come to-day. I've got an invitation to dinner for you to-night on the strength of my presentiment."

"Who's in town to eat dinner this weather?" Philip asked, quite as happy to see Steve as Steve was to see him.

"The Ingiams are home for two or three days. They're going to take a western trip, and have stopped to shop. They have three wonderfully pretty girls with them, besides their own three. You know the old lady is great on having a crowd of girls under her wing. We'll have to hurry, we hav'nt much time to dress.

In spite of his injunction, Philip was ready first, and stood tossing about the various

articles on the writing table, while Stephen finished his toilet.

“Here’s a clever little thing; who did it?” he said presently, interrupting Steve’s fire of questions, holding up a card for his inspection.

“Oh, that? A lot of us fellows had a little dinner the other evening, and Bartlett got up the cards. They were all pretty good hits. He’s doing first-rate, for a kid.”

It was a menu card Philip held, bearing a very good caricature of Stephen’s returning from a sketching trip, a huge pack of sketches on his back, and wearing the satisfied air he usually donned on such occasions. He was waving his hand expansively, and in the corner were the words, “Veni, vidi, vici!”

Philip stared at them as if he had never seen them before. He repeated them a couple of times, then, seizing a pen, wrote on a blank card, “Veni, vidi, —,” and inserted it into a picture frame over the mantel. He turned to Steve, who had been watching him in silence, and said, “The next time I see you I shall finish the sentence.”

“Are you in doubt about conquering?” Steve returned. “You needn’t be. You al-

ways were a lucky fellow. I expect you'll come back with the prize picture." Then the subject changed to art, and continued until they pulled the bell at Ingram's door. Not a word had Philip hinted about Rachel, thinking he would wait until he could tell everything without interruption.

They *were* pretty girls, Philip acknowledged. One, Miss Ranney, he had had a rather decided fancy for last winter. She sat next him at dinner, and he felt suddenly lowered in his own estimation that he could have believed himself satisfied with this girl when such perfection as Rachel existed.

"Still, she is very pretty, and bright as a dollar," he added, willing to do her justice, while Miss Ranney was thinking how Mr. King had changed. "Not half as nice as he used to be," she declared to herself, as one harmless artifice after another failed to call up the expression of devotion he had worn when with her last winter.

But even eleven courses will come to an end, if you give them time, and both men felt a decided sense of comfort and relief when they were finally seated in Steve's handsome apartments at the Brunswick.

"A nice little dinner," Stephen declared, as he lighted a cigar. "So few people understand how to give a dinner. What a pretty girl that black-eyed little Ingram is. She comes out next season, she told me. By the way, Phil, it doesn't seem to me the fair Ranney has quite the hold on you she used to have. Gotten over it, eh? Well, it isn't a good thing to be sweet too long on one girl. You'd get out of practice. You were hard hit on Miss Ranney for a week or two."

"Don't speak of it!" Philip broke out. "It humiliates me to think I ever cared for her shallow coquetry, when the fairest and purest woman God ever made existed on the same hemisphere! I know now what a poor thing it was I felt for Miss Ranney and all the others. Thank God, I knew in time."

"Good heavens, Phil! what is it?" and Steve reached for the bell in genuine concern.

"No; I am as well as you are, and don't want a thing. Wait and I'll tell you about it."

He told all there was to tell, and somehow his case seemed weak, now that it was put in words. Stephen listened with half-closed eyes, a cloud of smoke ascending with each breath.

"Now!" Philip exclaimed at last, "what shall I do?"

"Light your cigar and cool off," Stephen calmly suggested.

"Pshaw, Steve! You know what I mean. Would you advise me to propose to her?"

"Steve smoked several minutes in silence, then asked, slowly, "Will she have you?"

"That's the point. I'll tell you what I should like—you go back with me, and judge for yourself," Philip continued, eagerly. "I rely so on your judgment, old fellow, and you could tell so much better if you were to see her."

"No, I know enough of her, as it is."

"You can't know from what I've told you. You can't half guess how charming she is. You hav'nt even asked her name."

"There is no necessity for that. There can't be another woman on God's footstool like Rachel Dare."

"Do you know her, then? Where and when did you meet her? Isn't she beautiful?"

"Really, Phil., I don't believe you're more than twenty. Yes, she is charming—so

charming that I proposed to her myself last summer at Long Branch."

Philip fell back in his chair like he was shot. "You did!" he gasped, when he regained his breath. "Did she refuse you?"

"Of course she refused me, or I should have married her long enough before this. I suppose you are surprised. She's the only woman I ever thought enough of to ask to be my wife."

Philip reached out his hand and grasped Steve's. After he had dropped it, neither looked at the other for a minute or two.

"Now you see why I don't care to go back with you," Stephen continued. "You must judge for yourself."

"But from your individual knowledge of her, do you think she would have me?" Philip persisted.

"My good fellow, I'm afraid she would not," Stephen answered, deliberately.

"Would you advise me to try?"

"If the asking would be a relief, I would, yes. If a refusal would be a humiliation, I certainly would not."

"Well, about this Armstrong; what sort of a fellow is he?" Philip asked, after a long

silence, during which both men more closely resembled smoke-stacks than any other object in nature.

Steve answered in quick disjointed sentences, a slight pause between each :

“He’s a good fellow—rich, good-looking; has any amount of old women angling for him. Must do him justice. He’s not spoiled.”

After another silence, Philip asked, with deliberation :

“Do you think she was in love with him?”

Stephen rose, and placing both hands on Philip’s shoulders, answered gently :

“My dear old boy, if she wasn’t, she will never be in love with any human being. But I must say this much for her, I don’t think she knew it.”

“Did he know it?”

“I think not; I don’t think any one guessed it.

“And knowing this, you proposed to her?”

“And knowing this, I proposed to her,” Stephen repeated, smiling down on the eager face.

Two days after, Philip went back to the farm alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

“You can’t think how we missed you while you were gone, Mr. King. We’re perfectly delighted to see you back, aren’t we, Rachel? I was saying to Rachel this very morning, ‘If Mr. King doesn’t come back to-day I can’t stand it any longer.’ You know I only stay here half the summer under protest anyhow. It does Rachel good. To be sure, she’s not what one might call a delicate girl, but any one could see she’s not robust; and she says she gets so tired of a watering place. For my part, I don’t see what could be more monotonous than the time we spend here. Now, do you? Do tell us the news in the city. Of course, though, every one is out of town, and there is positively *no* news.”

“No, there was not much news,” Philip returned, finding Mrs. Dare expected an answer. “I am glad to get back,” and his eyes rested on Rachel’s face as he spoke.

She looked a trifle paler than usual, and did he imagine there were faint blue rings round the beautiful eyes? His heart fairly leaped as he thought, perhaps, she had missed him after all. How glad he was to see her! He

didn't know how unhappy he had been without her until he came back and found her rare, sweet beauty was real, and he had not imagined it, as he sometimes tried to persuade himself. She was smiling; she said she was glad to see him.

He had brought flowers for them all—a bunch of pansies and the latest novel for Mrs. Dare, delicate pink roses for Ellen, and pure white lilies, without even a leaf to relieve them, for Rachel.

"I would have brought you Marguerites," he said to Ellen when he presented hers, "for they reminded me of you; but, with such fields of perfect ones here, it would be bringing my coals to Newcastle. These dainty pink things suit her; don't you think they are like her?" and he turned to Rachel, who assented.

"Surely there is nothing particular about this," she thought, as he gave her the lilies without a word.

Mrs. Dare smiled to herself when she saw that even Mrs. Bernard had her bunch of crimson posies, and was rejoicing in the curious bowl he had brought her.

"Of course *you* are glad to be back," she

said. "I can understand why you should be with all this beautiful scenery around us. I should think it would delight an artist. But you see I can't utilize the scenery, and it doesn't do me any good. Of course I enjoy the pure country air, and all that, and if there were a few more people here it would be charming. Now, Mr. Dare says he would like to spend the whole summer here, and really I believe Rachel would. Did you see any one you knew in the city?"

"Yes, that is why I went," Philip answered, quietly looking at Rachel. "My cousin, Stephen Hendley, had written for me. By the way, he told me he met you last summer."

The girl's face never changed. She looked directly at him as she remarked: "Yes, I remember Mr. Hendley. Every one liked him. I knew he was your cousin. I think I have heard him speak of you."

Philip drew a deep breath. "What business had she speaking so coolly of poor Steve, as if he were the merest incident in her life?" Then he reflected, with quick self-reproach: "She had probably prepared herself—she knew we were cousins."

"Now, that I think of it, I believe you two

look alike," Mrs. Dare began. "Don't you think they do, Rachel? I remember him very well. We got to be quite good friends. Rachel, do you remember that frightful occurrence about the horse?"

"Perfectly well, mamma," and Rachel moved around to the other side of the porch, while her mother continued :

"Do let me tell you how we first met him. It was really romantic. Rachel was riding one morning, when her horse was frightened by a man lying in the road, and actually ran away—*deliberately* ran away. Mr. Hendley saw her coming toward him, and you can't think how brave it was of him! He caught her horse by the bridle and stopped him. Of course I wouldn't think of letting her ride that horse again. Mr. Hendley sprained his wrist, but she wasn't hurt. Now, don't you think that was unusual?"

"Very," Philip smiled, accounting for Stephen's lame wrist last year; "and had she never seen him before?"

"Well, yes, we had known him several days, but of course not very well. Did he speak of the occurrence?"

"Oh, no; he simply said he knew you."

Mrs. Dare went up stairs presently for her work, and while she was gone Philip had time to observe that Ellen also was pale.

"Where is your color, little one?" he asked; "you've grown pale while I was gone. Hasn't Gaston been behaving properly. If he has not, we must punish him, even if he be twice as muscular," and he laughed, feeling unusually light-hearted, while she blushed and hung her head. "Hasn't he been here since? What shall we do to a laggard lover?" and he took the little hand in his.

"Oh, yes, he's been here. It isn't that, really."

"A quarrel," Philip thought, his glance softening as it rested on the shining head, bent low over the flowers. Then he continued: "Do you like the roses, Ellen? I was afraid you might like something better."

"Oh, no, I couldn't," and disengaging her hand she quickly left him.

The next day Gaston came. The harvest was finished at Martone's, and the grain here was ripening fast. The bustle of preparation for the important event interested Philip. It was all so new to him. He frequently wished that some of these busy men could stand in

the picturesque attitudes they unconsciously assumed until he had time to sketch them.

The day was intensely sultry, and every one was wishing the rain would come, that they might have a fair start to-morrow. But the heaven's suspended their fury until midnight, when they burst forth with greater violence because of their delayed action. Huge branches of trees came dashing against the house, and the rain fell in torrents. One awful flash of lightning was followed so closely by a crash of thunder that Philip sprang from his bed and hurried to the window, expecting to see the great barn in flames, but was relieved to find it quite as dark outside as it had been before. He fancied he saw a glimmer of a light under the door as he turned from the window and heard the sound of footsteps; but it rained so hard, and the lightning was so constant, he came to the conclusion he had imagined it, and lay down again, soon sleeping soundly, notwithstanding the storm raged almost all night.

Gaston did not sleep. He remembered the agonizing fear Ellen always felt during a storm, and listened to hear if she had been awakened. Presently, when one clap came a

little louder than the rest, he waited no longer, but, lighting a candle, dressed himself hastily and went outside to her door.

“Ellen,” he called softly, “I am here; are you afraid?”

Immediately the door was opened, and Ellen rushed out to him. She still wore the frock she had worn that day, and, glancing in, he saw the little white bed had not been slept in.

“Oh, Gaston, I was so afraid!” and, forgetting everything but that he was the same Gaston on whose strong shoulders her head had so often rested, she threw herself into his arms and sobbed.

“I wanted to go down to mother, but I was afraid. I’m so glad you came. Oh, Mother of God, pray for us!” she cried, as the loud crash came which alarmed Philip. “Oh, take me to mother; I must go.”

With one arm around her, and holding the candle in the other hand, Gaston proceeded to do as she desired, feeling a sudden awakening of hope as the frightened little heart beat fast against his arm.

“Do you think *he* could have been struck?” she asked, as they approached Philip’s door, and in her face he read that which told him

how vain his hopes had been. He had not guessed it was Philip who had won Ellen's affection from him, and the knowledge fairly stunned him. She repeated the question, and he answered patiently:

"No, dear; he's safe."

"But he might not be, Gaston," she insisted. "Won't you please see?"

He did as she asked; he walked to the door, leaving her stand at the stairs with the candle.

"He is safe," he said briefly. "He is up and moving about the room," He saw her expression of relief when she heard his words; he heard a little murmured prayer of thanksgiving, and still his hand was steady as he took the candle once more, and led the way until she was safe in her mother's arms.

"Mother of God, pray for us," he mechanically repeated when he had reached his own room again. A gust of wind had blown out the light, and he groped his way back, an occasional flash of lightning making his path visible. "Oh, Mother of God, pray for us," and there in the storm and the darkness this man told himself he had lost all that he cared to live for. "Why couldn't I have missed that?" he cried, as he recalled the very tone

in which she had asked for Philip. Oh, it was hard to see the little face he had loved so long brighten at the knowledge of a stranger's safety. He knew Philip moved in a world above him, "but not above Ellen," he thought; "she's fit for any place." How could he have expected her to care for a rough farmer like him, when she was so dainty and lady-like and so far above him in education.

"She likes soft words," he said, "an' I don't know how to give 'em; but he can't treat her any kinder 'an I would have treated her." Presently a disturbing thought came: "Oh, God, if he didn't love her! but he must; he couldn't help it," he quickly added. Still that vague fear troubled him.

When morning came they found great damage had been done by the storm. Entire trees had been uprooted, and the beautiful wheat lay with its golden head bowed to the earth. The river was roaring and rushing, carrying with it boards and rails, and branches of trees, and whatever it could get in its greedy flight.

"De river hain't so high as it will be dees afternoon," Henry Bernard said, accepting his losses with calm philosophy. "If you go to de rapids den you will see a sight."

Martha Bernard, also, was able to see a bright side, and told Gaston "they wouldn't have so much trouble with that there wheat as he thought they would. Some of it over in the fur corner by the hill hain't hardly hurt at all."

Every one was conscious of a restless, unsettled feeling that day. Nothing could be done until the water ran off the fields, and it was tiresome to be obliged to sit about doing nothing.

Philip alone was occupied all day, and in the afternoon, when Rachel was singing, he felt that he had earned a reward, and went down to her. He had no fixed purpose when he went, only the desire to be with her; but when she paused and turned to him with her sweet smile, before he knew it, or intended it, he had gone to her and gently told her he loved her.

He told his story simply, but she knew he was in earnest. She started a little when he began, but, after that, sat very quietly until he had finished. Then there was a pause, at the end of which she turned to him slowly and asked:

"Is this my fault?"

“No,” he answered; “you could not have prevented it.”

“Oh, I am glad; for I don’t know what to tell you.”

“Then don’t try now,” he said eagerly. “Wait a day, a week; I’ll wait forever, if you will only say yes at last.”

“That is the trouble,” she returned, with a puzzled expression. “I don’t know that I will say yes at last.”

“Give me at least the satisfaction of waiting. Don’t tell me no at once. Wait a week, and I shall not trouble you in the meantime,” he said, not daring even to take her hand. He knew it was better to let her take time to decide. He understood how essentially different her nature was from his.

“If that is a satisfaction, you may have it,” she said kindly, and a moment later she had left him.

“My God, my God, help me to bear it!” and in an agony of sorrow Ellen rushed from the porch, where she had heard it all. Up to her room she flew, seized her bonnet, for her first thought was Father Dutton.

“He will comfort me,” she said as she tied the strings with restless fingers. Then down

the road she ran, conscious of the river surging along beside her, still feeling that it was a long distance removed from her. Great pieces of plank and boughs from the trees were still rushing swiftly down, and she followed their course, thinking, "I don't go fast enough; they will get there first."

Gaston saw the little figure from the field, as she ran down the road, and, obeying a sudden impulse, followed her. But she had a long start ahead of him, for the brook in the meadow was swollen, and he must go away up to the bridge to cross. "I expect she won't like to have me a comin' after her," he thought, "but it's mighty queer for her to go walkin' so fast to St. Benedict, when she might as well ride."

How far it was this afternoon! Ellen thought she would never reach there. Everything was clear to her now. Oh, how blind she had been! How foolish to dream that he might perhaps care for her, when Miss Rachel lived in the same house. Oh, how foolish!

Ah, there is St. Benedict's at last. There is the church on the hill, and Father Dutton's house. She could almost fancy the door was standing open. How glad she would be to

see him ! It's not far from the bridge, and as she stepped onto it she was conscious that a crowd of men on the other side were shouting ; it couldn't be to her. Yes, one is old Baptiste. What does it mean ? Is she dizzy ? Is she falling ? No, the bridge is really moving ; she is being carried away on it. Then she heard Gaston's voice back of her calling : " Hold on to the railing tight, Ellen ; I'll come ;" and, crouching down, she did as he bade her, feeling safe in his promise.

After awhile, she did not know whether it was a minute or an hour—she felt a jar, a crash, a rush of cold water, and that was all.

Father Dutton was seated beside her saying his beads when she opened her eyes again. She was in a funny little bed with white curtains. Why, this was Mademoiselle's guest chamber ! How did she get here ? Ah, yes, now she remembered. How could she tell him ? and she covered her face with her hands.

" Did you wake up ?" he asked with his fatherly smile. " I must tell Hortense ; she has something for you to take," and he walked to the door, returning with Mademoiselle bearing a bowl of steaming liquid.

“Take it, child; it is good for you,” he said, seeing her hesitate.

“But I thought I was drowned,” she said, sitting up.

“You would have been drowned if God’s mercy had not sent Gaston at the right time,” he answered her gravely.

“Oh, I wish I had been!” she wailed, hiding her face in the pillow.

“That will do, Hortense,” he said in French. “Tell Gaston to wait. Now, my child,” he continued, when the door was closed, “tell me all about it.”

He knew what she would say, and reproached himself as he listened with aching heart. Why had he been powerless to prevent it? He had hoped Gaston would be in time. Why had he done so little and rested so contentedly after he had seen the danger coming?

She was right in thinking he would help her. She felt the peculiar sense of comfort one feels after a physician has dressed a gaping wound, removing with kind, firm touch the external sting, the general discomfort, leaving only the deep-seated pain.

“Would you not like to stay with Hortense for a day or two?” he asked her when she had

finished. "The Sisters have come back, and they would be glad to have you near them."

"Oh, yes, Father Dutton; may I stay? I could not go home."

"Yes; we will send word to the good mother we will keep you with us a few days. She can spare you? If not, I can send Annie from the Convent to help in your place. Then I will tell Gaston what he should say."

"Has she told you, Father? Do you know?" Gaston asked sadly as the priest entered the room where he waited.

"Yes, my son, she has told me," and he placed his hands on the young man's shoulders and looked affectionately into his eyes. "I can only pray for you both. I had hoped it would be another way, but we cannot always have what we hope. God knows best, God knows best. I would keep her here a few days; it is not well she should go back now. Tell the mother the Sisters are here, and will wish to see her. Stay, she shall write a note. When the mother hears the bridge is gone she will fear the child is hurt."

"Is it on my account she wants to stay?" the young man asked; "I won't trouble her."

"No, my son; on his."

CHAPTER XV.

Great was the astonishment at the farm when they heard of Ellen's escape. They never knew how near she had come to "knocking at the door which swings between forever and no more." Gaston did not tell them that, had he been a moment later, a huge timber would have struck the dainty little head and crushed it against the stone pier. Her mother was not surprised that she did not return, for the nuns often kept her over night with them, and, as they had just come back from their retreat, they would naturally be glad to see her. The note assured her the child was not hurt, so she was satisfied.

That night Rachel told her mother she was right—Mr. King had been in earnest.

"Did you refuse him, dear?" the mother questioned eagerly.

"No, mamma; I told him I would answer him in a week."

"Was that wise, Rachel? Don't you think you should have known at once if you wanted to marry him?"

"No, I didn't know, and I never felt this way before. He was anxious I should wait,

and I told him I would," and Rachel said good-night with an air of weariness.

"I hope you are right, dear," and her mother kissed her affectionately.

After she had gone Mrs. Dare wrote a long letter to Aunt Anna, and in the morning sent the boy to the office before breakfast, that he might be in time for the first mail.

Philip's conduct those few days was perfect. He never hinted the most remotely to his probation. He was bright, talkative, considerate. He did not harass her with his love, as most men would have done, and his forbearance pleased her.

Three days after Mrs. Dare had an answer to her letter. They were seated in the parlor and Rachel was singing. When the song was ended she began:

"Aunt Anna says Dick has gone," and there was a ring of actual exultation in her voice; "and"—in a slow tone, very unusual for her—"your father will possibly be here to-morrow evening."

"Does he say so?" Rachel asked.

"Not positively, but he says be prepared for a surprise."

Philip was joyous, radiant, buoyant that

night, after he heard his rival had gone. She had refused him then. He hummed a little tune as he undressed. He wished he were a boy that he might turn somersault, or stand on his head, he felt so ridiculously happy.

“Poor old Steve,” he thought, “it will be hard on him at first.” Then he thought how delightful it would be to have a house of his own. It was so long since he had lived like other people. “I expect she will like to travel at first,” and he fell asleep, wondering where she would like best to go.

He awoke with the sense of something delightful about to happen. He could not stay in the house to-day; he must do something unusual; he would go for a tramp, the morning was so bright.

The afternoon was spent with Rachel, reading aloud as she and her mother worked.

“I am expecting papa; I must make myself very fine in honor of his coming,” Rachel said, when he protested she was going up stairs too early. Supper was postponed until the boy, who had been sent to the station, should have time to return.

“I shall go down to the road to meet him,”

Rachel said presently, gathering up her long gown and running lightly down the lane.

She looked positively regal this evening, Philip thought; the diamond ornament in her hair suited her. She should have a tiara when she married him. Oh, if the week would only end!

Standing there at the gate she heard the carryall coming. It was quite dusk by this time, and she could not see distinctly. Yes, her father was there. There were two figures in the carriage. She would surprise him, and she stepped out of the clump of lilacs where she had stationed herself. A tall figure sprang out, calling, "Drive on, Ben," while she marveled at his agility, and ran to meet him with both arms outstretched.

"Dick!" she gasped, seeing her mistake a moment before she reached him, and a second later she was folded in Dick Armstrong's arms.

Oh, the bliss of that moment! Then, and only then, did she guess why she could not say yes to Philip. If he had gone, and she had never known, or known only when it was too late.

They had no idea how long they were there. Dick explained how her mother had guessed

what her decision would be, and had written Aunt Anna in time to prevent him from going abroad. Finally Rachel saw the lamps were lighted within doors, and persuaded Dick to come with her into the house.

To one person waiting the time was interminable, while the other took it very complacently, considering the fact it was her husband she was expecting.

Not until they had almost reached the door did Rachel remember poor Philip inside.

“Oh, Dick, that man is waiting for his answer. I am ashamed to go in when I am so happy.”

“I am his answer,” Dick replied. “Happiness is nothing to be ashamed of.”

The moment Philip heard the name of the newcomer he knew there was no hope for him. The air of pride with which Rachel introduced him was enough. He often wondered afterward how he managed to sit at the table that evening at supper, and see her look at Dick with that happy light in her eyes. Why had he not seen she could never love him?

The next day he asked to see her a few moments that he might speak to her again before the week was out. She saw that he knew.

She read the difference in his manner from the air he had worn before. That had been an eager, hopeful boy; this was a disappointed man.

He thought he never loved her so well as when she told him she could not marry him. She did not try to tell him how sorry she was, but he knew. She told him all about Dick, and Philip felt that he would give the world to have clasped her close to his heart at that moment, and held her there. But he only pressed his lips to the slender hand she gave him in farewell, thanked her for her patience, and was gone.

The next day Steve received a letter, asking him to meet Philip in New York—that he would sail for the old world the following week. If Steve cared to accompany him, telegraph, that Philip might engage passage for both.

That was all; but Steve's eyes were moist as he read. "Poor old Phil; I hoped she would have him."

Going to the mantelpiece he took down the card Philip had placed there, and, moving to the table, took up a pen; but before he had

written a word he paused, and, laying it down again, said :

“ No ; I’ll let it be as it is, ‘ Veni, vidi, — .’ ”

Her name was never mentioned between them. Philip never told him all. They were in Bruges when her wedding cards reached them, and then she had been married several weeks.

THE LAST.

What a gratification it is sometimes to be able to thrust our fingers through the veil kind Providence spreads before the future ! Quick ! let us take them out, and peep before it is closed again.

Ah, I see Philip King, with a happy wife by his side ; on his other hand is Stephen Hendaley alone.

I see a grave, bright with flowers, where a white-haired priest sleeps his last sleep.

I see a brown-eyed nun, whose golden hair is shorn, and hidden under a white cap ; inexpressible peace lives in those gentle eyes. She is teaching a child who bears the name she once bore in the world, “ Ellen Bernard.”

Gaston, too, has found comfort.

But this is long, long after.



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